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THE VOLUNTARY READING HABITS OF 10 - 12 YEAR OLDS:  
A SURVEY ANALYSED WITH REFERENCE TO SCORES ON  
CATTELL'S CHILDREN'S PERSONALITY QUESTIONNAIRE

Jennifer C. Blackburn M.A.

Thesis submitted for the degree of M. Phil,  
School of Education,  
The Open University  
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## ABSTRACT

The entire First Year (n = 85) of a small Catholic Comprehensive school was surveyed in order to investigate voluntary reading habits. These pupils had at 10+ answered the Primary Questionnaire, and subsequently at 12+ reported on one month's reading, using a specially developed measure.

The study's main phase, however, assessed pupils aged 11+. Half the group recorded their reading on Book Forms while the other matched half were controls. A Secondary Questionnaire administered before and after the five-week experiment found no significant differences in numbers of books read.

All the children filled in time-sampling Diaries on three occasions during the experimental period, and the advantages of this method of establishing how much voluntary reading is undertaken are discussed. A sub-group of particularly 'avid' readers was distinguished and compared to the others, with especial reference to whether books were finished or not and whether they had been read previously. Girls were found to be more avid than boys on various measures.

Analysis of the reasons for choice recorded in the Book Forms, together with other evidence, suggested that one of the reasons why the children did not read more was that they lacked the skill to choose books they would enjoy from the thousands available, and that the selection strategies they did employ were likely to lead to disappointment.



Finally, Cattell's Children's Personality Questionnaire was administered to all pupils. The avid readers tended to be more intelligent, more stable emotionally and less excitable than the others. If they were girls, they were also more vigorous and zestful than other girls; if boys, they were more self-controlled, with a stronger self-concept than other boys. These and other significant findings may indicate some of the personal qualities which sustained book-reading requires, and thus contribute towards an explanation of the variation in voluntary reading habits in these children.

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## INTRODUCTION

This introduction is in three parts. The first attempts briefly to sketch in the background to the study and its setting; the second describes the structure and design of the report, and the third raises some methodological issues.

### BACKGROUND

In the middle decades of this century the emphasis in reading research was on the initial stages of learning, and an interest in how the skill was subsequently used was relatively slow to develop. Recently, however, reasons have been sought for the wide and unexplained differences between children, and indeed adults, in the range and amount of their voluntary or 'recreational' reading. Such factors as age, sex, social class, intelligence and reading attainment have been identified, but much of the variation remains unattributed. This study attempts to explore further variables, and in particular the association, if any, between voluntary reading and personality as measured by a widely used personality test. The dependent variable, reading 'avidity', is also investigated from different angles in order to try to define it more closely.

The population involved was the entire first year (n = 85) of a small Catholic Comprehensive school in Cheshire. The 42 boys and 43 girls were between 11 and 12 years old and were not unrepresentative with regard to social class or intelligence. Nevertheless, no attempt has been made to generalise from the findings because it is hard to know the effect, if any, of the fact that the pupils were Catholics.

## STRUCTURE AND DESIGN

The same children had already answered the Primary Questionnaire (Chapter 3) when they were 10+ in their Junior schools. At this earlier stage, a longitudinal study had been intended, but because of the validity problems referred to below, the Primary Questionnaire came to function as a pilot for the Secondary Questionnaire. Chapter 3 also reports the results of interviewing some of the most and least avid readers, and the conclusions this led to. Then Chapters 4 and 5 describe the Secondary Questionnaire, (given twice), which better enabled the researcher to distinguish a sub-group of particularly 'avid' readers. After other measures, namely the Book Forms (Chapter 6) and the Diaries (Chapter 7), had confirmed the composition of this sub-group, Cattell's Children's Personality Questionnaire (Cattell 1973) was administered and the personalities of the 'avid' readers compared with those of the others (Chapter 8). Finally in Chapter 9 some conclusions and recommendations are offered.

The Appendices give, for reference, the questionnaire and forms used, together with a report of a different instrument for assessing reading, the One Month Reading Record. This was used when the pupils were 12+, thus completing the longitudinal aspect of the study.

## METHODOLOGY

At the inception of the research, Evans (1968) was used as a general guide to experimental design. The Primary Questionnaire was influenced by that devised by Whitehead et al (1977), which is described in Chapter 1, but it soon became clear that there were serious problems of validity



raised by asking children to recall all book titles read over the previous four weeks. The Secondary Questionnaire was an improvement, but at the expense of being able to base an ordinal scale of 'avidity' on a single item. There was in any case a need for a triangulation approach (Bynner 1981) involving some measure of number of books read, number of other periodicals read, proportion of leisure time spent reading and frequency (self-assessed as well as objectively rated), and attitude to reading. The Diaries were therefore introduced; Book Forms were thought a sensitive instrument, but could only be filled in by half the year group for experimental reasons. Even in Chapter 8, where the methodology of investigating possible differences between avid readers and others in personality test scores might appear straightforward, it was difficult to decide on the best definition of an avid group. These issues are discussed as they arise in the study.

The data have been analysed according to Siegel (1956) where a relatively conservative approach is used. Yates's correction for continuity has been used for chi squared in 2 x 2 contingency tables, despite suggestions by Pirie and Hamden (1972) that it overcorrects. The correction for grouping used for the coefficient of contingency comes from Garrett (1966) page 395. For the Children's Personality Questionnaire only US norms are available; the implications of the use of n-sten tables for mixed sexes are discussed in Chapter 8, but again the effect is to increase the possibility of Type II error rather than Type I. Thus while the study as a whole does no more than indicate an area which merits further investigation, yet its findings, though limited in scope, deserve some confidence.

## CHAPTER ONE : REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

## CHAPTER ONE : REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The research literature on the subject of voluntary reading is extensive. It is described and evaluated here in order to place this study in context and to show its origins. A mainly chronological approach is adopted: the aspects of the subject are so various, and the contribution of research papers so multi-faceted that this seemed, finally, the simplest course. Others, notably Whitehead et al (1977), D'Arcy (1973) and Heather (1981) have also tackled the problem in this way. Chronology has however been abandoned on the occasions when thematic links needed to be stressed, and the Summary draws attention to the major themes that arise, and their implications for the present study. Works of a more theoretical, less empirical nature, which attempt to answer the question "Why do we read?" are discussed in Chapter 2. Several bibliographies of different aspects of the field are available; in particular, Mann (1977) and Monson and Peltola (1976) have been consulted.

### A CHRONOLOGICAL SURVEY, 1900 -1983

#### Jordan 1921

An interest in voluntary reading has been slow to develop among educational researchers. Even E B Huey's influential work, The Psychology and Pedagogy of Reading (1908), which is valuable for his suggestions about the teaching of silent reading in schools, had less influence than one might have expected, and was taken up by few except W S Gray. These early studies remain, nevertheless, well worth perusing. In Children's Interests in Reading, A M Jordan reviews previous studies in the USA from 1897 -

1912 and concludes, like some half a century later, that asking children why they like particular books is "a rather useless procedure ... since there is such a comingling of false and general facts in the reasons". Jordan gave a questionnaire to 3598 nine to eighteen year olds in four schools in Arkansas, Kansas and Washington DC. They were asked to list 5 favourite books in order and 3 favourite magazines. These were analysed into 11 'types'; the girls seemed keener on juvenile fiction and the boys on adventure. At one school the same questionnaire was given again six months later: the titles recorded were very similar overall, and 10% even gave the same books in the same positions.

Jordan also visited libraries near New York to check on popular reading. His interpretation of the reasons for sex differences in book and magazine preference is that girls are more interested in 'feelings' and in being good, kind, socially acceptable etc., whereas boys are interested in action, contest, in testing themselves against the environment. Our knowledge of the exact nature of the gender discrepancy and the reasons for it has not advanced very much, considering the time interval, since 1921.

It is no coincidence that the next four studies of voluntary reading habits were also written by Americans, for it was in the United States that much of the early work in this field was done. Terman and Lima (1925) reported on 808 children aged between 6 and 16 in California, but recognised that their reading, at averages of between 2 and 3 books per month from ages 10 to 15, was probably higher than in other regions. Gray and Munroe (1929) referred to about 700 studies of young people's reading habits and interests but

found only 100 investigations dealing with adults. Their study of two US communities, however, using questionnaires and interviews, showed that more adults than young people used public libraries. They stressed the importance of motivation and of individual differences in reading tastes and patterns.

Some of the influences on these patterns among adults were said by Waples and Tyler (1931) to be, in descending order: "a person's sex, education, occupation, age, environment (rural or urban) and time spent in reading" (quoted in Karetsky 1982, page 97). The factory workers studied by the researchers read newspapers but only a little fiction; what they actually read bore little relationship to their expressed interests, and Waples and Tyler concluded that this was because the major influence on reading habits is accessibility, and the material they wanted was not available.

An important new contribution to what was still rather a scattered field of research was Wilson's The Geography of Reading (1938). This showed the unequal distribution of library resources in different areas of the US and suggested causes and solutions. Wilson brought together a vast mass of data and new techniques of demographic, economic and statistical analysis. He wrote, "The library may well be regarded as an index of the status of a community's educational and cultural organisation" (quoted in Karetsky 1982, page 295), an opinion which might have been echoed in the United Kingdom, where the first major investigation into British children's reading habits was being carried out.

## Jenkinson 1940

A.J. Jenkinson published in 1940 What Do Boys and Girls Read?, a survey of 2900 12 - 15 year olds. It has remained a valuable source of information and recommendations about voluntary reading and the English literature syllabus. Jenkinson sent a questionnaire containing nine items to 17 'senior' schools and 11 'secondary' schools. (The terms 'senior' and 'secondary' are approximately equivalent to the 'secondary modern' and 'grammar' of the 1944 Education Act.) 1570 boys and 1330 girls responded, most of them from single sex, urban schools. Their teachers also answered a brief questionnaire about the books read in English lessons.

Jenkinson asked pupils to list titles read in the previous month. Although this practice may be open to objection, it has been used extensively over a long period (e.g. Whitehead 1977) and provides data which is presumably valid for the comparison of different types of reading matter, unless 'school stories' for instance, are more forgettable than other kinds of story and consequently under-represented. The method is, however, likely to be less useful for those trying to find out the amount of reading undertaken, which is partly why it was abandoned in the present study after the Primary questionnaire (Chapter 3).

By this method, Jenkinson's senior school boys had read on average between 3.9 and 4.3 books in the month according to age, while his senior school girls read between 5.1 and 5.3 books. In the secondary schools boys had read between 5.0 and 6.0 books and girls from 5.9 to 6.5 books. Those who had read no books were excluded, but their numbers were small. The figure for senior school boys in the Fourth Year who had read no books in the previous month was only 5.9%,

and for secondary school boys 4%; for girls the percentages were negligible. When the questionnaire was used in New Zealand by Scott (1947) on 3972 13-18 year olds, the results were very similar.

One cannot however necessarily assume that the above figures are comparable with those of later surveys, for if a school had more than one stream, Jenkinson's questionnaire was only given to the A-stream. How far this affected the results we cannot be certain, but it seems likely that the most able of the secondary (i.e. grammar) were over-represented in the sample, and the less able in both kinds of schools under-represented. Even after making some allowance for this, it may seem that adolescents read less than they did about 35 years ago, if the comparison with, for instance, figures given by Taylor (1973) and Whitehead (1977) is valid. One of the reasons for this might be that all Jenkinson's Senior schools and many of his Secondary schools held regular private reading periods; although frequently recommended, it is not clear in the later studies if this remains as common a practice in schools.

In the 1940 survey, boys and girls were also told to categorize each title (all of which were assumed to be fiction) as one of several types: "school story, detective story, story of home life, adventure story, love story, historical story or collection of stories (e.g. an Annual)". Ingham (1980), commenting in general on the practice of categorizing books, says that it oversimplifies and misrepresents; moreover, it may give rise to sex-stereotypic replies in that boys who read Paul Zindel might yet be reluctant to claim a liking for 'love stories'. Moreover, the differences between Pride and Prejudice and a Mills &

Boon romance are more important to most readers than the similarities. The finding that adventure stories formed the most popular category overall, especially with boys, may thus appear more informative than it is, particularly when one considers the great differences between what individual readers bring to any one book, and what they take away from it. Yet this complex and rather unprofitable area is still being investigated (Summers and Lukasevich 1983), using a system of paired comparisons to construct a reading preference inventory based on 14 themes: these Canadian 10 - 12 year olds once more liked adventure and mystery stories best.

Jenkinson also investigated his children's magazine and newspaper reading, showing particular interest in the 'bloods', defined as the story papers, comics and magazines specifically written for boys and girls (e.g. Wizard, Comic Cuts, Schoolgirls' Own) as distinct from those aimed at adults. He found that the secondary school boys' reported reading of bloods declined from an average of 3.7 each per month at 12 years to 0.8 each at 15, whereas the senior school boys' average only declined from 4.2 to 4.0. The picture was similar for secondary school girls (2.0 to 0.6) except that fewer were read in the first place. The senior school girls, however, increased their reading of bloods from 2.7 to 4.2 over the years from 12 to 14 (and then left school). This was because they read more 'love magazines', of which the modern equivalent would be Jackie, Mirabelle, Photo Love etc. This contrast with the secondary school pupils was "perhaps the biggest single difference to emerge from the investigation." In addition, the same senior school girls often read comics aimed at a much younger age group, an



illustration of the very wide range of adolescent reading, commented on by several researchers.

Those boys and girls who were found to read many books were often those who read a great deal of everything else as well. Jenkinson concludes that all adolescents go through a normal phase of reading bloods, and that this is perfectly healthy and in any case unaffected by anything a teacher might say or do to counteract it. Most pass out of this stage in due course, the abler ones earlier than the less able.

When it comes to newspapers, a more critical attitude is shown. Most of them were bought, of course, by parents, but those read extensively by boys and girls "are all of the sensational type ... Altogether they constitute a powerful unifying or standardising agency ... which standardises thought, taste and conduct at low levels of insight, sensitivity and refinement" (page 89). Again, many of the 12 and 13 year olds, who reported reading the 'Children's Corner' as well as the news, showed that they were thus reading "at very diverse levels of seriousness and maturity".

Finally, Jenkinson's survey of teachers led him to draw some interesting conclusions about the books used in English lessons, and to voice criticisms which other researchers (notably Pugh 1969 and 1971) have still needed to make some thirty years later. Texts are read too slowly, and they are too far from pupils' interests. They are often too difficult, especially those chosen for 13-15 year olds. (Interestingly, a more recent objection, from H.M. Inspectorate, DES 1979, has been that it is the books for the 11 and 12 year olds that are too hard and that the later choices are not taxing enough). Jenkinson goes on to say that the

list of authors studied is narrow and restricted when compared with the range and variety of English literature, and that it reflects the concerns of adults rather than those of children. The same is true of plays and poetry: both could and should be closer to the pupil's own experience.

#### Wall 1948

In 1948 W.D. Wall published a study of newspaper reading among young people and adults. The total number of subjects was 1284, comprising 318 boys and 275 girls both aged 13.0 to 16.11, 190 men aged 17.0 to 40, and 142 women aged 17.0 to 29.11. The men and women were nearly all in the armed services, and had attended an elementary school, as had the children. There were also 194 boys and 165 girls aged 13.0 to 16.11 from selective grammar schools.

About half of the respondents claimed to read more than one paper daily, but 10% of the men aged from 20 to 40 did not read a daily paper at all. The study also gives a great deal of detail about the parts of a newspaper which were most read by the subjects. Wall concluded that because the years from 13 to 16 are a time of such radical change, a "crucial" period, adolescents should be taught in schools to understand newspapers and to develop a more critical attitude towards them.

#### Williams 1951

It was in the same journal in 1951 that A.R. Williams described a survey of magazine reading amongst 11-16 year olds in order to see if there were differences between the preferences of grammar and secondary modern school children. There were 4298 responses, the balance between types of school and the sexes reflecting that in the population as a whole.

Both boys and girls were found to read on average two magazines each, and to increase their reading from 11 to 14, after which interest slackened. In grammar schools, comics formed 25% of boys' total magazine reading, and in secondary modern schools as much as 59%. For girls the figures are similar but slightly higher. Bloods, however, were more read by grammar school boys (45% compared with 29%) and the pattern holds for the girls. The findings on the numbers of bloods and comics read regularly at 12+, 13+ and 14+, and the percentage of children reading no magazines (i.e. bloods and comics) are compared to those of Jenkinson and of Stewart, who published a very similar survey in 1950. There are close similarities between the results presented by Stewart and by Williams, although there seems to have been an increase in comic reading over the decade.

Williams also draws attention to the fact that many children alleged that they preferred bloods to the more juvenile comics, yet they read more comics. It is arguable however that this is simply because bloods took considerably longer than comics to read, and required, with longer stories and comparatively few illustrations or 'strips', a greater reading fluency. This is an example of the danger of assuming that a subject who reads 3 comics or books a week is necessarily reading more, either in number of words read or in time taken, than a subject who reads 2. A more accurate measure of reading amount is required than merely counting titles.

### Norvell 1950 and 1958

Reading preferences, but this time in relation to books read in class, were also the subject of Norvell's two reports. In the 1950 work he presents data collected over twelve years from 50,000 US high school (12 - 18) students who rated their class readers on an interest scale. Less than 1/3 of the respondents gave the books chosen for them an 'acceptable' score. Norvell's conclusions are similar to Jenkinson's: that texts read in class should be ones known to be well liked by pupils, and that individually chosen books should also be encouraged. With younger children, however, (eight to eleven year olds) Norvell's second survey (1958) seemed to suggest that a book read independently might be less popular than the same book read in class. This may indicate that the class-read books were too hard, an implication borne out by the findings of a British research worker, J.D. Carsley.

### Carsley 1955

A slightly younger age group was the subject of this study in 1955. A questionnaire was answered by 2050 ten to eleven year olds, who were balanced with respect to sex, social class and type of primary school attended, although between 3% and 10% of those present in each school were not literate enough to answer the questions even after the teacher had read them aloud. Both the books read at home and the books read at school were included, and one finding was that for 95% the home was the better environment for private reading as there was less distraction and interruption than at school. Children, moreover, gave higher enjoyment ratings to books read at home than to books read at school. Inglis (1969) echoes

this: "Children would rather read in conditions of their own choosing, away from school and for long periods at a time." More recently, Language Performance in Schools: Primary Survey Report No 1 (Gorman et al, 1981) makes much the same point.

Carsley found that books read aloud in class by the teachers of these ten year olds were almost always 'classics', with very different levels of readability. Most would be too hard for most of the children to read to themselves, but an expressive and well-planned reading performance can of course get round many textual difficulties. One may doubt, however, whether busy teachers were able to make every reading aloud of this kind. Many of the books listed, moreover, were adult novels, which even if abridged are unlikely to appeal to the interests of primary school children.

Carsley also lists the types of fiction preferred, and adventure stories are again most popular, but as the 18 categories are different from Jenkinson's, detailed comparisons are difficult. Animal stories, which Davies (1969) found were liked best by 30% of 2000 junior school children were only rated 11th in order of preference by these 10 - 11 year olds. Finally, Carsley gives the children's reasons for choosing a particular book to read, in order of apparent importance. These are as follows:

1. Having read some of the book first
2. What the book is about
3. A parent or teacher's recommendation
4. Name of author
5. Having seen the story on TV or film
6. A friend's recommendation.

The children voted factors 1 and 2 as more than twice as important as the others put together. Later studies (Spalding 1960, Pugh 1969, Ingham 1981a) found that the peer group influence, 6., was paramount, and certainly more respected than 3. The explanation may be that children also said they would like more opportunities to listen to recommendations from friends. Such opportunities will be made for themselves by avid readers, but the less eager majority would benefit if the teacher set up the framework for the discussion of books in class, as recommended by Chambers (1969) and Jenner (1981), amongst others. It seems that if this was a regular part of school life pupils might well read more (as fifth-graders in Donald Bissett's 1969 study did) or choose more successfully as a result. This point is one of those considered in the present investigation.

#### Connor 1954

A study of a different type was published by D.V. Connor in 1954. 214 Australian 12 year olds from three schools were assessed on Parts 1, 2 and 4 of the Australian Council for Educational Research Reading Tests. The quality and quantity of their voluntary reading was then measured by means of two questionnaires. The reading habits (both quality and quantity) were found to correlate positively at .45 with reading attainment, with intelligence held constant. The subjects were then divided into three groups,

according to their 'good, medium or poor reading habits', and the groups were equated for intelligence and sex by means of matched pairs. Significant differences were found between each group, and Connor concludes (page 225) "the good readers (in terms of reading attainment) are the ones who also read more and better quality reading material, and poor readers read less and poorer quality material." The relationship thus found may not be causal, of course, and if it were, the cause might operate in either direction, but the investigation is a careful one, using stringent criteria, and the results are important in providing evidence about something that is too often merely assumed.

#### Gray and Rogers 1956

The study by W. S. Gray and B. Rogers (1956), Maturity in Reading, discussed the concept embodied in the title with reference to a sample of American adults. Interviews led to the completion of 'reading profiles', which seemed to indicate that the length and level of formal education was the most significant factor in determining reading patterns. The authors put forward the idea of 'social participation': that those who are more personally involved, interested and active in local and national issues read more and join more organisations. They are 'opinion leaders', showing 'cultural awareness', and only they are truly mature readers. The view that "the doers are the readers" is quoted (from B. Tuchmon) in Cole and Gold (1979) and is echoed in other research amongst children (Ingham 1981c) as well as amongst adults.

### Smith and Harrap 1957

In 1957 W. H. Smith the booksellers and G. Harrap the publishers sponsored on a very large survey of the reading habits of 11 - 18 year olds. 4000 boys and 4000 girls filled in a questionnaire, three-quarters of both groups coming from public and grammar schools rather than secondary moderns. Because of this the figures for the two sexes and school types cannot be taken together, and as the replies are not differentiated by age it is difficult to compare the results with those of earlier studies. Given a restricted choice of thirteen types of books, at least half of which would probably be non-fiction (e.g. 'Travel' and 'Natural History') both groups of girls chose 'Adventure' as the category 'of most interest', with figures of 58% and 55%. Moreover although the boys preferred 'War' books (50% for both school types), they also gave 'Adventure' as the third most popular, at 35% and 38%. Percentages for public and grammar schools are quoted first in both cases. 'Adventure' is of course an all-inclusive term, but its popularity here again, for the third time, may indicate the adolescent's need for action and excitement in his or her books, something that it commented on again below.

Library membership is given in the Smith and Harrap survey as follows:



TABLE 1.1 Percentage of pupils belonging to the public  
library

Boys - public and grammar school	73.16%
Boys - secondary modern	57.80%
Girls - public and grammar	82.16%
Girls - secondary modern	70.80%

Enid Blyton is the second favourite author for secondary modern boys, and the favourite, by a wide margin, for all the girls. Favourite magazines, apart from Eagle, School Friend and Girl, are largely adult ones, and it is difficult to be sure, as with newspapers, how far the preferences are determined by what parents buy or what school libraries have available rather than by unfettered choice. One could argue that in the Smith and Harrap survey as a whole, both while formulating the questions and while analysing the responses, the investigators lost opportunities to gather much informative and valuable data.

Himmelweit et al 1958

The study by H. Himmelweit, A. N. Oppenheim and P. Vince, Television and the Child (1958) is still of great interest, and it throws light on reading as well as viewing habits. As a result of her 1955 Norwich survey, Professor Himmelweit found that children of 10+ years read on average 2.7 books a month, and at 13+ 2.5 books a month. (Whitehead's ten year olds read 3 books, the 12+ group 2.2, and the 14+ 1.9 books). She also notes that boys, and children of average ability, read less if there was a TV set at home, but that after they had had access to one for three years, they reverted to their former book-reading habits and often read more advanced books (after, for instance, a serialisa-

tion on TV) and more non-fiction. TV seemed to induce wider interests, especially in these 'average' children, and they did not go back to reading as many comics as before the set was acquired. Himmelweit comments that it is as though television satisfied those needs previously catered for by the comics, an idea echoed by Schramm et al (1961), who are quoted in Greaney 1980 (page 341) as having postulated that TV may be better than comics at meeting the fantasy needs of children. Gunter (1982) agrees: "It seems that programmes featuring fantastic, superhuman characters and fast-moving action sequences, which children generally find highly enjoyable, have come to replace adventure books, comics and other popular children's reading matter as a source of entertainment and satisfaction of their fantasy needs" (page 234).

Similarly, Cramond (1976) writes "TV has greatly reduced children's needs for comics except in the case of heavy viewers who read comics more often than occasional viewers" (page 276). She also suggests that children indulge in less unorganised play and day-dreaming than before the advent of television. As to the value of such day-dreaming, whether in front of the TV, alone or with the aid of a comic, J. R. Brown (1976) comments "It is often maintained that escape into fantasy is a negative, dysfunctional activity, but it seems equally likely that it has positive values: giving respite, allowing a new perspective on problems, and, where the dynamics of fantasy are limited to the escapist's problems, sometimes leading to their solutions" (page 116).

### Spalding 1960

In 1960 E. L. Spalding published Books Through the Child's Eyes. This is an interesting source of comments by children on their reading, with the emphasis on personal choice and individual enjoyment. The range and variety of children's reading is stressed, and the importance of the right book at the right time. The author also reports the results of a questionnaire answered by 1528 eleven to twelve year olds, "approximately the same number of boys as girls", from 30 schools in Glasgow and one in the Outer Hebrides. Unfortunately not enough details are given for one to be confident of the validity of the results. 208 (13.6%) did not mention any comics as being read at all, and of those mentioned Dandy and Beano were the most popular, with about 680 readers each, almost all of whom read both. 502 children used school libraries, 658 public libraries, 226 both and 359 none. It is not really possible to compare with this Leng's (1968) figure of 53% of 6 - 13 year olds using the public library, as his subjects, unlike Spalding's, all lived within a one mile radius of the library.

### Pickard 1961

In 1961 P. M. Pickard published I Could A Tale Unfold, which includes a report of her findings on "What Children Like" in 1952. 382 children of 10 - 11 years filled an orally administered questionnaire, which method gave rise to the comment: "The question for which I had to wait longest and give most encouragement was the one that had really given rise to the enquiry - i.e. what it was that children liked in their favourite comics. With every group the first reaction was to have absolutely no idea" (page 32). The reaction is understandable, but eventually the children

produced reasons, most of which referred to the comics as being either exciting or funny. The former quality was the most commonly expressed of the two, and there were other comments which indicated the satisfactions engendered by a story which ends in a just and conclusive way. 93 different comics were listed, the Beano and Dandy being favourites with both boys and girls. Pickard was particularly interested in the difference between fear and nightmares caused by reading comics and that caused by reading books, and found that only 2% of the sample said that they had ever experienced fear or 'bad dreams' because of books. In contrast, 26% had felt fear and 18% nightmares over comics, perhaps because it is easier to see a picture involuntarily, and thereafter to retain the image and its suggestions, than to re-create mentally a scene originally suggested by words.

#### Butts 1963

In a study of author preferences published in 1963, D. Butts asked 486 children to name their favourite fiction writers. The boys and girls were from 14 Yorkshire schools but all in the 'A' stream, and were evenly spread through the age groups of 11 to 15. Butts expresses surprise that the resultant list contains 126 names only, but this seems in accord with other studies and with what one would expect; H. G. Wells comes first with 22% and E. Blyton second with 21% of the citations. The latter was most popular with 11 to 13 year old girls. The children were then given a list of twenty authors to be placed in order of preference. The first five were the same as in the previous list and in the same order of preference, which may suggest that this list had had an influence on the previous open-

ended one, if they were administered at the same time.

Butts also enquired into types of stories preferred and the most important factors in a book. The latter seemed to be "something happening all the time", a requirement which seems comparable to the emphasis on 'exciting' comics in Pickard's survey. Others were "easy language", "a clear moral", "beautiful descriptions" and "a reasonable length", in that order. The two last seem rather unexpected. Jo Stanchfield's subjects, reported in Boys' Reading Interests as Revealed through Personal Conferences (1962) also liked "lots of action", a book "full of excitement", "something going on all the time". They disliked reading about "just ordinary things you do every day" or "all about pets and a family" or when "nothing much happened".

#### Pumphrey 1964

The same emphasis on excitement as the major factor occurs in George Pumphrey's 1964 questionnaire. In order to update earlier research he asked grammar, secondary modern and primary school pupils which comics they 'got regularly' and how the stories could be improved. Both boys and girls wanted more exciting stories, and expressed criticism of advertisements and of the similarity of plots. Many also read adult periodicals, a point which other researchers have made, noting that there is no clear-cut age division. Pumphrey comments that sales of comics had dropped between 1955 and 1964 and that many had changed or amalgamated, a process which has continued since.

Interesting suggestions about the influences affecting young readers were made in a study based on a questionnaire given to 288 girls by Lane and Furness-Lane (1967). The researchers drew up a 20% random sample from one comprehensive school (11 - 18 years) and categorised their respondents as those who (a) preferred 'juvenile-pop' books and magazines, or (b) had 'adult-romantic' tastes, or (c) liked 'educational' (intellectual and hobby) reading matter. Those in category (a) apparently read more on impulse, and therefore they re-read books from home a good deal, and they read on the recommendation of a teacher or librarian more than the other groups. Those in category (b) were more likely to get their books and suggestions for reading from outside school. The authors conclude that "the simple fact of which books are where is, we believe, an important factor determining who reads what among children who are essentially non-habitual readers" (page 23). The implication may be that the teacher and librarian should take a fuller part in choosing and recommending suitable books, in making them easily available and in building into school life opportunities for their discussion and their reading. These points are dealt with at length and in detail by, amongst others, Chambers (1969 and 1973), who warns however that the idea that all we have to do is to surround children with books and everything else follows automatically is naive. The present study, indeed, makes it clear that one essential requirement is that the children should also possess sufficient choosing skills to select from the books that surround them those which they as individuals will enjoy. The question of book supply has also been

investigated in a controlled experiment by Ingham (1981) which is discussed below.

#### Pfau 1967

An interesting experiment by Donald Pfau (1967) in the USA explored one of the factors that may influence young children to read for pleasure. 170 first-grade six year olds were randomly selected and assigned to experimental and control groups in five different socio-economic school communities. Over a period of two years the experimental group had an extra 30 minutes a day for recreational reading activities, in order to gain what Pfau called the pleasure often needed to develop a desire for further reading. The control group had only the usual basal reader, which the experimental group had also.

The differences were significant at the .01 level: the experimental group made more trips to the library, withdrew more books, mentioned reading more often in a free-response interview about what they liked doing at home and at school, and chose more reading-orientated items in the Reading Interest Inventory that was administered. Their teachers thought the experimental group more fluent in the language arts programme, though it was not significantly better in spelling and oral language fluency.

#### Leng 1968

The next study shows other factors associated with reading for pleasure. It is a careful analysis of what books were borrowed from a public library in a small Welsh town over one year by children aged from six to thirteen. Only those children (N = 1055) who lived within a one-mile radius of the library were studied; of them 53%, as already mentioned, used the library during that period, borrowing

11,000 books. Children in the Library, by I. J. Leng (1968) is a unique book in that it deals with pupils away from, or at least less affected by, the influences of schools and teachers. At the same time their proximity to the library, and therefore their ease of access, is constant; those who went to schools outside the area were excluded. Leng found that most of those who used the library were girls, and most non-users boys. In addition, users were more intelligent, were more likely to go to a grammar school, did better in their school work and tended to come from families with three children or fewer, as compared to non-users.

Leng investigated types of books read, dividing them up into stories concerning fairies, puppets, animals, gangs, school, ponies, a mystery, an adventure, a family, careers and adolescents, and non-fiction. He writes, "In their choice of books, whether fiction or non-fiction, the girls reveal their constant concern with personal relationships and inner experience, the boys their interest in the external world and physical activity" (page 58). The boys' borrowings tended to have an older main character than the girls', though both sexes read about older characters as they themselves became older, and also then chose books with fewer illustrations and smaller type. The boys read more books with male main characters, especially as they neared 12; the girls read fewer books with heroes as they grew older, but still a substantial number. The boys read more adventure stories, perhaps, Leng surmises, because they saw less of their adult roles than the girls did (the latter being able to watch their mothers at home) and thus boys read about supermen, immune to social pressures.



Leng shows that of those with IQs of 101 - 120, of whom 1/3 normally would have been expected to pass the 11+, the library members gained twice as many places as non-members. The findings "lend support to the suggestion that joining the library materially improves the chances of a child at the border-line of gaining a grammar school place". Since selection was, however, presumably on the basis of a test similar to Leng's non-verbal IQ test, the members might have been distributed unequally in the range 101 - 120. The difference refers almost entirely to boys: girls who were library members were no more likely to pass the 11+ exam.

Of the 1055 children, 30% at 6 years, 67% at 10, 61% at 11 and 56% at 12 were members. Yet 14.5 books per reader were borrowed at 6 years but 26.5 at 12: in other words, there were fewer members but they read more, perhaps because the less enthusiastic readers had dropped out. Of the 555 members, 43% were boys and 57% girls. Leng offers this explanation, which is interesting to consider in view of the sex differences found in the present study. "For children reading is at best a substitute for personal experience and personal involvement. Children therefore tend to read most in those periods in their lives when they find themselves shut off from fresh experiences... Boys are free to pursue outdoor activities which are more attractive to them than reading, while the girls, still largely confined to the home but increasingly dissatisfied with the occupations in which they have hitherto engaged, read more."

Leng feels (page 179) that children read for a combination of relaxation, emancipation, compensation and regression. This view ignores the other functions of reading detailed in Chapter 2, especially the way the 'second-order

experiences' of literature are a source of knowledge as well as an enrichment of 'real' experience. Children in the Library suggests that pupils' reading moves from fantasy to romance to realism in progression towards maturity. Leng does, however, make the point that "fiction, to make its full hallucinatory effect, needs to be read almost automatically; laborious, effortful reading does, quite literally, break the spell" (page 172). This may well be why poor readers have less chance of enjoying reading. He also shows an early interest in the personality variables: "It is not unlikely that the introvert and extravert, for example, will be found to differ from one another in their reading tastes and habits in a relatively constant and predictable fashion" (page 160). Because he feels, however, that reading is 'at best a substitute' he predicts the direction of personality difference in a way which strongly contrasts with the findings of Chapter 8 in this study. He writes "The child who stands apart from his age-mates is likely to read more than the socially acceptable child who adopts the standards of the group" (page 159).

Leng's opinion, however, remains commonly held. The Primary Questionnaire (Chapter 3) included three questions intended to probe this area in a very preliminary way, but the association between avid reading and this very approximate measure of introversion was not significant.

Mellor (1977) found girls more introverted than boys and better on a word discrimination task. Lakey (1979) investigated the personality characteristics of non-reading adults, but adult illiterates who have sought out tuition in local education authority centres are hardly comparable to less frequent readers of 10 - 12 years. It is nevertheless

worth noting that Lakey's subjects (two-thirds of whom were men) were found to be normally distributed on Eysenck's extraversion/introversion scale (Eysenck and Eysenck 1965). They achieved, however, significantly high scores on the neuroticism/stability scale, and there may be a connection between this finding and the association between less frequent reading and a lack of emotional stability reported in Chapter 8, where this whole matter is discussed in more detail.

#### Alderson 1968

The first detailed analysis of the content of magazines commonly read by teenagers was published by C. Alderson in 1968. She discussed three of the most popular, Trend, Jackie and Valentine, all of which retain their appeal today. Although there were differences of emphasis, the magazines were found to abide by the same taboos: no mention was made of drunkenness, deformity, illegitimacy, colour, religion, divorce, politics, sex or current affairs. No sick, poor or fat people appeared in the stories and comic strips, and neither blacks nor children had their existence acknowledged. Not all these taboos have persisted to the present day but a cursory glance will still reveal the restricted subject matter of these magazines.

Alderson found a remarkable similarity of story-line from one issue to another, the commonest concerning a girl who is duped by a glamorous 'wolf' of a man and in the last frame turns to her faithful quiet boyfriend and finds 'true love'. The magazines' content tends to be anti-intellectual, in that students are portrayed as having no time to date and therefore being undesirable both as models and as friends. The 'office jobs' that are aspired to never have

any reality as no details are given of the actual work done. Any idea that smacks of non-conformity is rejected by the protagonists of the stories, as are boys and girls who are outside a restricted social class or clique.

The author feels that the magazines are evasive of real problems (for instance about sex) and that they perniciously encourage girls "to 'dream' rather than to 'do'" (page 109). Readers are told what they'll like and addressed as though they're all office girls themselves, living near 'town' and going on 'formal dinner dates'. In fact most of the readers are either still at school, or in unskilled or semi-skilled work. The language of the stories is "composed of almost nothing else but cliches" (page 67). The style is that of teenage slang, chatty, intimate, telegraphic, exclamatory and frenetically bright. The plots are in terms of simple dualities, where every action is motivated by a single feeling only.

The girls who read them realised how unreal the magazines were (though this may still not prevent their being influenced by the unreality), but nevertheless enjoyed them greatly. As well as stories, they wanted accurate, topical information on pop-stars, and the magazines gave them this, in detail. Often there was an attempt to make the stars sound 'zany', 'cookie' or 'way-out' in some way, so that they seemed original, but at times this was based on the elevation of something very trivial, like "He collects socks!!!" Stress was constantly placed on possessions, in the stories as well as in the pop sections. But despite their attractions for readers, Alderson concluded in her study that these magazines had a harmful influence, restricting and biassing attitudes and ambitions. They gave girls

an identity as teenagers and showed them how to conform to it; it is doubtful if their function in this respect has changed much since.

#### NATE 1968

In the same year (1968) the National Association for the Teaching of English's Warwickshire branch published the results of a survey amongst eleven to sixteen year olds into leisure reading of all kinds. The nine schools which took part, though not a strictly random sample, provided a wide variety of different types, and formed about eleven per cent of Warwickshire secondaries; in each, some 50% of the pupils answered the questionnaire. For certain questions only the results of a 25% sample were used. All pupils' abilities were estimated by their teachers and recorded in four categories: A - GCE or CSE grade 1 potential; B - CSE 2, 3 or 4 potential; C - CSE 5 potential and D - non examination. Lists of magazines and comics read showed that category A pupils read more adult, special interest and educational magazines, especially in the First Year at age eleven, when C and D pupils read mainly picture comics. This pattern continues so that in the Third and Fourth Year few A/B read Beano and Dandy. A/B girls list a narrower range of magazines than A/B boys, even in the Fifth Year, however. (Most C/D pupils left school at the end of the fourth year at the time of the survey.)

Children were also asked to list favourite types of fiction from a choice of 15 and of non-fiction from 16. As with the other studies, adventure books were the most popular in every year with both boys and girls. 'Westerns' were much more popular with category D than A, whereas the reverse was true of 'school' books. With all the boys,

science fiction, 'career' and 'love' books were more liked by older pupils than younger; for the girls, historical, humorous, love, science fiction and travel books appealed more higher up the school. In non-fiction, boys preferred sport and girls animal and cookery books.

Pupils were asked how many books of their own they possessed. In the lowest group (0 - 10 books) there were far fewer category A pupils and many (up to 70% amongst the boys) category D pupils. This discrepancy holds good for the girls as well, though to a lesser extent.

In view of the findings of other studies (Lane and Furness-Lane 1967, Pugh 1969) on peer recommendation, the NATE results are of particular interest. Children were asked to put 'parent', 'teacher', 'friend' or 'own' by their list of books read recently; about 60% of the titles had been chosen on their 'own' recommendation. The figures for 'parent' decrease over the five school years, whereas the figures for 'teacher' move in the opposite direction, reaching 36% for fifth year girls. 'Friend' ranges from 10% to 18%, the latter being the figure for the girls. These last percentages contrast with Pugh's (1969) figure of 38% of 13 to 14 year olds, but the difference may lie in the fact that his pupils were in groups when asked (by an indirect interview technique which he describes) on whose recommendation they selected books. This question may have influenced some who had not thought about the matter before to assume, or remember, that friends (who might be listening) had recommended books to them, and perhaps even to resist the idea that teachers and parents chose their reading whereas NATE's more straightforwardly factual question might not have brought attitudes into play quite as much.

The final question in the NATE questionnaire was "Write down the names of any authors whose books you particularly enjoy", and once again Enid Blyton topped the list. Dickens was also popular, having presumably been read in abridged editions by the younger pupils, and Stevenson and Fleming were liked, the former in earlier years and the latter in later ones. The listing of specific titles, in response to the question "Write down the names of all the books you can remember reading since September 1966", followed the same pattern of preferences. From 2% to 10% had read no books during the period, whereas from 20% to 32% claimed to have read one book or more a week, the girls and category A pupils being strongly represented in this group. In contrast to the findings of other studies (e.g. Whitehead 1977), there seemed little change in reading avidity over the five years, with either girls or boys. This point is discussed more fully later.

#### Bissett 1969

In the following year (1969) in the USA, Donald Bissett completed a dissertation on recreational reading amongst eleven year olds (Fifth grade). 190 children were trained to record all books read outside school, and then allocated randomly to one of three groups: A (control), B (with books made more accessible) or C (with teachers and peers recommending books in the class library for 90 minutes a week, as well as increased accessibility). Comprehension checks were administered to check the validity of the children's record keeping.

When the children were post-tested for vocabulary and comprehension the differences between the groups were not significant. There were however differences, significant at the 1% level, between the mean numbers of books read voluntarily during the 15 weeks of the experiment, as follows:

TABLE 1.2 Mean numbers of books read during Bisset's  
experiment

Group A	8.56 books
Group B	11.56 books
Group C	22.67 books

Thus the recommendations from teachers and peers, during class time, together with increased availability of books, seem to have had an effect on the amount of these subjects' recreational reading.

A similar investigation was carried out by Roney (1975) but here the results were less clear-cut. Fourth-grade children (ten year olds) in ten classes listened to teachers promoting some books by reading passages from them aloud, and observed an equal number of books promoted by being displayed on 'bulletin boards'. Other titles were not promoted and acted as controls. Given a free choice, the children tended to borrow the books which had been read aloud rather than those on display, but the effectiveness of the promotional techniques seemed to vary a good deal from class to class.



### Fader and McNeil 1968

Also in the USA, D. N. Fader and E. B. McNeil (1968) published accounts of their influential work in Hooked on Books. Daniel Fader chose an ordinary high school as control and a boys' training school for juvenile delinquents as the experimental school. The mean I.Q.s were slightly higher in the high school, and there were more whites and fewer blacks there, but the schools were comparable. In the boys' training school Fader instituted a programme for 'English in Every Classroom' which was in many ways similar to the 'Language across the Curriculum' ideas that were becoming current in the U.K. at about the same time. He said that reading and writing were the responsibility of all teachers ('diffusion') and that reading matter that the boys would enjoy should be available in abundance ('saturation'). To this end textbooks were replaced wherever possible by attractive paperbacks, and newspapers and magazines were used extensively in class. Through the generosity of local businessmen, a reading room was established, from which all boys could choose two books, which they were given to keep. If they preferred they could then exchange these for another two, as often as they wished.

During the lessons themselves the boys were encouraged to write at great length, and kept diaries with a minimum entry each day, quite privately and without their teacher marking them. The aims were to change boys' attitudes rather than aim at a particular level of performance, and to do this by beginning where the boys were, with their present likes and interests, so that they could learn to be confident with written language. Materials were to be

stressed rather than methods.

Fader and McNeil concluded that boys at the boys' training school as compared with the control school had improved significantly their verbal proficiency test scores in the number of ideas given, the number of words and the length of words used. The brighter, and the white boys always did better than the Negro boys in these tests and better than those with lower I.Q.s. In the control school boys actually produced fewer ideas and had lower scores on the tests after a year of the experiment than at the beginning. The same sort of improvement through voluntary reading was noticed in a similar experiment administered later by Elton McNeil in a summer camp for disturbed or delinquent boys.

Fader's study also lists the most popular types of books read, and once again adventure and action books (science fiction, spy, detective, war) head the list. Thus his study echoes the findings of several others, and his and Bissett's ideas of the importance of 'saturation' or accessibility of books influenced later investigation (e.g. Ingham 1981a).

#### Pugh 1969

A.K. Pugh reported in 1969 on a survey of 80 thirteen to fourteen year olds undertaken earlier that year. An indirect interview technique was used, whereby student teachers, armed with checklists of the information required, spoke informally to groups of about four children chosen at random in order to obtain the answers needed "in the course of ordinary conversation". 15% had read no books in the previous two months, and 19% had read seven or more, this latter figure being the one to compare with the 20% to 30% in the NATE survey who read a book a week. The figures for

book recommendation, already mentioned, are in full:

TABLE 1.3 Answers to question on book recommendation

Do you select books on:		
teacher's recommendation		18%
parents'	"	10%
friends'	"	38%
because have read about the book		6%
because have seen the book in a library		65%

The latter two figures together are perhaps the equivalent of the NATE 'own', which was 60%. It is interesting that when the sample was split into 'avid' and 'less eager' readers, half the avid readers said they chose books on the recommendation of their friends, as against one quarter of the less eager readers. Still more (84%) were influenced by libraries (there were multiple answers to the question) but the suggestion remains that, as Pugh writes, " .. there are groups of enthusiastic readers who get together almost in spite of the teacher and compare their experiences in reading and then help each other" (page 8). In contrast, 19% of the sample said they did not enjoy the English readers given out by the teacher, and 37.5% only 'sometimes'.

Only two years later, the contrasting results of another survey may indicate the differences that exist in the way English is taught.

### Calthrop 1971

Kenyon Calthrop (1971) sent out a questionnaire about class readers to heads of department throughout England, in secondary modern, comprehensive, grammar and public schools of different types. Where teachers' replies were of particular interest, their schools were visited, and the children (N = 1000) were asked to rate the novel they'd read on a five point scale, from 'enjoyed reading it' to 'thoroughly disliked'. Calthrop concludes that "Most children enjoyed the books which their teachers (had) said they (had) enjoyed. Their reaction was nearly always on the positive side of the mean. The total reaction of the boys and the total reaction of the girls... was remarkably similar" (page 111).

The discrepancy between these findings and Pugh's is likely to result from the fact that the only schools visited were those where the replies of the Head of English had shown particular thoughtfulness about and interest in class readers.

### Pugh 1971

Pugh published the results of a further survey in 1971, this time of a random sample of 123 thirteen to fourteen year olds (mostly 14). A questionnaire was administered and only 5% did not like the school readers, although 61% liked them 'sometimes'. A free-response section inviting children to spend about five minutes writing what they thought about reading was analysed for implicit attitudes. "40% expressed a positive and apparently genuine appreciation of the value and/or pleasure derived from reading, while only 12% considered reading to be a waste of time. The others were either luke-warm (28%) or expressed what could well have

been received opinions (20%).” Pugh comments finally (page 10) that although a standardised reading test had been administered, “it appears that the relationship between positive attitudes to reading, amount of reading undertaken and measured reading ability is less obvious than one would expect” - an apt summary of the difficulties in this field.

#### Yarlott and Harpin 1971

In the same year Yarlott and Harpin published in two parts a report of 1400 fifteen to eighteen year olds' reading preferences. The pupils, all from selective schools, stated their preferred categories of books (out of 32), types of books, (out of 13) and favourite authors. Humorous writing, mystery and suspense, serious novels and science fiction were the most popular; the omission of 'adventure books', which topped the list in other surveys, may be explained by the fact that these respondents were older. Favourite authors were I. Fleming, D. H. Lawrence, A. Christie and H.G. Wells. The latter, together with Hitchcock, Dickens and Blyton, also appeared popular amongst younger secondary school children at the time (Hayes 1972).

The first part of Yarlott and Harpin's paper dealt with the pupils' reactions to the set literature texts they studied, and like Fader, Pugh and others, although referring to a different age and ability group, they stress the importance of the 'consumer's response'. "There is a tendency to prescribe what 'ought' to be read without any regard to how the prescription relates to the pupil's immediate interests and concerns and to his own reading preferences" (page 96).

### Taylor 1972 and 1973

An interesting study of comic and book reading amongst eleven to fifteen year olds in secondary modern and grammar schools was published in 1972 and 1973 by J.J. Taylor. In the comic investigation (defining comic as a periodical with most of its material in picture-strip form) he found that an average 1967 comic had between 1/4 and 1/12 of the verbal content of a 1940 comic - i.e. fewer words. In 1939, when Jenkinson was collecting data for his study, the Wizard contained about 40,000 words. In 1972 an average Hornet, a comparable comic, contained 10,000. Taylor also found that non-comic readers watched less TV and read fewer magazines and books, whereas those who read many comics watched more TV and read books, and other magazines, less. This finding is of interest as a contrast to that of Himmelweit quoted earlier, though a contradiction is not necessarily involved.

Taylor's subjects for both parts of the study were 2000 pupils covering the whole of the ability range in two grammar and two secondary modern schools; as the sample was not balanced, figures are given separately for the two types of schools. The Dandy and the Beano were popular with all boys, but there was "a sharp fall in the readership of the Dandy and the Beano amongst Fourth Year grammar school boys", perhaps because "their tastes matured earlier". After extracting non comic-readers, 3.4 comics were read on average per week by 11 - 13 year olds. Even at 14 and 15, secondary modern girls still read 3 - 4, and seven out of eight grammar school girls at the same age still read comics regularly.

Taylor's 1973 study focussed on books, and the results are tabulated below.

TABLE 1.4 % who had read no books in previous month

(N = 2000)

	1st yr	2nd yr	3rd yr	4th yr
Secondary modern boys	13	17	27	19
" " girls	1	9	22	16
Grammar Boys	1	4	6	8
" Girls	0	0	4	8

TABLE 1.5 Mean books read in a month (non-readers extracted)

(N = 2000)

	1st yr	2nd yr	3rd yr	4th yr
Secondary Modern Boys	1.9	2.2	2.1	1.6
" " Girls	2.6	2.7	2.3	2.3
Grammar Boys	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.6
" Girls	2.9	2.6	2.6	2.9

These figures confirm the general tendency (noted by Whitehead 1977 and others) for more pupils to have abandoned the habit of reading at 15 than at 11 years old. Taylor also comments that the boys in his sample read far more non-fiction than the girls and the girls read far more fiction than the boys. This finding is confirmed with a younger age group by Gorman et al (1981) in the Primary Survey Report No.1, where significantly more boys than girls are said to prefer non-fiction.

Two other papers published in 1975 are of interest, but for very different reasons. Fenwick (1975) reported an investigation in which 191 junior school children of ten to eleven recorded for six weeks their fiction borrowings from their six school libraries and showed whether the books chosen were 'rejected' or finished. On average the boys took out four books and the girls five in the period, the range being from one to sixteen books. The rejection rates were then compared with other factors, and it was found that children with more books at home rejected significantly more. Children in schools that were well provided with books also rejected more - the library provision index used was the total number of library books less 1000, divided by the number of children using the library. Children from higher social classes rejected more; shorter books, not surprisingly, and books with many pictures in, were rejected less. Those books which were accepted by most children (i.e. finished) were mostly read in a few days. Those libraries with rigid rules (e.g. that books could only be returned on certain days of the week) had more rejections. No significant differences between the rejection rates of boys and girls were found, nor when their scores were further differentiated in terms of the mean number of books selected; in other words, avid readers did not reject proportionately more or fewer of their books than infrequent readers, a finding which contrasts with my own reported below. No significant association was found between rejection rates and extraversion, instability, or low reading age.



One can of course interpret a high rejection rate (e.g. among middle class children) as evidence of a discriminatory and critical approach which should be encouraged, and this largely what Fenwick does. Alternatively, one can see it as the result of a lack of ability to choose successfully a book one likes. If the latter view is taken, the child may be in need of guidance, for presumably the experience of often starting books and being disappointed by them because they are not what is expected must eventually tend to discourage any attempt at all. Many children of this age have some difficulty in finding enough stamina to tackle a full length book in any case, and a high rejection rate can only increase their problems. Various interesting questions of interpretation are thus raised by Fenwick's study, and some of them are further explored, though with reference to contrasting data, in the present investigation, below.

#### Greaney and Clarke 1975

The other paper published in 1975 was read at the UKRA conference of the previous year, by Vincent Greaney and Michael Clarke. The researchers studied the effects of two methods of reading instruction on leisure-time reading habits. For eight months, one Dublin class of eleven to twelve year olds (A) used the traditional basal reader and the other class (B) chose their own individual reader and took part in conferences, group work and activities based on the reader. The 74 children had been randomly assigned to the two treatments. It was found that the experimental group (B) read more, spent more time reading, and read 'better' books than the controls. Six years later, 66 of the original subjects completed a questionnaire. The significant results were that in group B more had read at

least one book in the previous three months, although they did not seem to spend any more time reading books. They read more of both fiction and non-fiction, but only their reading of non-fiction was significantly greater. Greaney and Clarke's work relates closely to the earlier studies of Bissett (1969) and Pfau (1967) and this aspect is further developed.

#### Whitehead 1977

The several recent investigations mentioned indicate a recent revival of interest among researchers in the study of voluntary reading. This phenomenon was not confined to the United Kingdom, for in New Zealand Elley and Tolley (1972) reported on Children's Reading Interests, and the same title was originally used for a large scale and influential survey by F. Whitehead and colleagues (1977). Whitehead reported for the Schools Council on a questionnaire sent to a stratified random sample of 197 primary schools and 201 secondary schools throughout England and Wales. 7,800 children were involved, aged 10, 12 and 14, slightly over half being boys. 10% of the schools also participated in follow-up interviews.

One of the questions asked the children to list the titles of any books they had read voluntarily during the previous month. As stated earlier, the average at 10+ was 2.95 books, at 12+ 2.21 books and at 14+ 1.95 books. This decline with age in number of books read, which is well attested by others (e.g. Leng (1968), Chambers (1969), Heather (1981)) may not be irreversible. The American Book Industry Study Group's survey of adult reading habits, published in Cole and Gold (1979), found an average of 18 books read in six months, which suggests that in adulthood the

reading habits of the British ten to eleven year old may reassert themselves, at least in the USA.

In London, the Society of Young Publishers had earlier found (1960) that 59% of a sample of London adults were 'in train of reading a book' when asked. Euromonitor (1980) reported that 45% of 2000 over sixteen year olds were currently reading books, and refers to the 1977 General Household Survey which affirms that 54% of all adults said that they had read a book in the past four weeks. In each case the figures for women are about five points higher than those for men, and more women read fiction. (The Euromonitor survey also found that two-thirds of all adults were reading fiction, and Peter Mann (1982) in From Author to Reader, an interesting overview of different aspects of writing, publishing, bookselling, lending and reading, writes that 60% of library issues are adult fiction, even though only 36% of library stock falls into this category.) Thus the decline in reading during the mid-teens appears to stop at some stage, and certainly the over-sixties read extensively.

Having established which children seemed to read extensively, Whitehead noted associations between this and other factors. In the youngest age group, who were still at primary school, the avid readers tended to be high in ability and attainment, female, from the non-manual social class and to like school. (The way these independent variables were measured is described in detail in Whitehead's book). Those who read little at 10+ had low ability and attainment and their parents tended to take 'non-quality' newspapers. At 12+, the avid readers also had high ability and attainment, liked school, came from small families and attended

schools in which classes were either streamed or mixed-ability, but not setted. At 14+ the avid readers tended to expect to leave school at 18 rather than earlier, and liked English lessons.

These variables are listed in order of importance within the age group. When analysed in accordance with the General Linear Hypothesis other factors also appeared of significance at various ages; avid readers had parents who read library books, went to a school with one central library only, and where "the emphasis in English falls upon reading from a wide selection of books but at the same time a small number are reserved for class discussion and reading" (page 108) and went to a single-site rather than a split-site school.

Whitehead's achieved sample was 7839 children, of whom 25.4% had read no book in the previous month. Those who had, a total of 5846 children, had read 7557 different titles, and these titles covered an extremely wide range, from Dr. Seuss's The Cat in the Hat to Gogol's Dead Souls. Whitehead decided not to classify these titles as most others researchers had done into 'adventure stories', 'mystery stories' etc. His reasons are similar to those advanced at the beginning of this review, and those given by Ingham (1980); Whitehead writes "the boundaries between such categories are hard to establish at all unambiguously, and the rationale for such classification is so uncertain that there is some doubt as to what benefit it achieves" (page 111). Having said this, however, Whitehead then proceeded to invent his own seven-fold category system. Books were first split up into narrative or non-narrative, the narrative ones being mainly but not necessarily

fiction. He makes the valid point that the fact that The Dam Busters is non-fiction and The Cruel Sea is fiction makes little if any difference to the reader. The next division is into juvenile narrative and adult narrative, and then further into quality and non-quality. Here difficulties arise. There are problems in arguing that Nevil Shute is 'quality' but Daphne Du Maurier is 'non-quality', or that 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea is juvenile and The First Men in the Moon is adult. The final two categories, however, have clearer boundaries, being 'fairy tales, myths and legends' and 'annuals'.

More than 3/4 of the books read were narrative, and this category formed more than 4/5 of the girls' reading, but only 2/5 of the boys'. Between 8% and 10% of the boys, indeed, read non-narrative books only. Whitehead also notes that "for all sub-groups except the 14+ girls, children from manual families read a significantly higher proportion of non-narrative books than children from non-manual families," adding however that 'manual' total reading is in any case less.

The tendency for adolescents to read less as they grow older is illustrated by the decline in average numbers of books read from 2.95 at 10+ to 1.95 at 14+. It is made even clearer by the percentage of non-book readers, which rises amongst the girls from 9.4% to 32.4% over the same period, and amongst the boys from 15.8% to 40.0%. Surprisingly, more than 2/3 of the non-book readers of 12+ and 14+ had been assessed by their teachers as average or above in ability and attainment, so that although a proportion found reading difficult, most did not. It is suggested that it was those who read non-quality narrative only who were more liable to

discontinue book-reading between 10+ and 14+, but clearly the reasons for the decline over the period are not due to any one factor only. One should remember too, of course, that someone who reads no books may yet read comics, magazines and newspapers very extensively. Whitehead notes, however, that most periodicals, apart from ones like *Angling Times* and *Loving*, read by some 14+ boys and girls, now contain picture strips only and have, as Taylor (1972) found, a severely reduced verbal content in comparison to their pre-war equivalents. He quotes with approval (page 285) "an international authority" who "has contended that children need to have read a million running words before they become fully accomplished in their reading skills". It appears, then, that periodical reading will not help a child much towards this target, although it must have some influence. It may be, however, that the crude stereotypical ideas about people and their motives absorbed by the comic reader do more harm than the extra reading practice (nearly always in upper case print only, for some reason) does good. Shayer (1975) attacks *Warlord* for its blood-thirstiness: "a descent into the basic and base instincts which are the lowest common factor of all males." O'Connell (1982) discusses sex stereotypes in children's comics and television, and points out that 85% of the sexed characters in the Beano are male.

In any case, periodical reading also declines, from 3.29 per week at 10+ to 2.91 per week at 14+. For girls the rate of decline is less steep than for boys, whose average book and periodical reading both decrease over the period. Rather surprisingly, Whitehead omits any detail about newspapers taken (apart from the quality/non-quality vari-

able already mentioned) and the questionnaire does not even ask if the children read or enjoyed those taken at home, or any part of them. Our knowledge of the newspaper reading of adolescents had not advanced much since Wall's survey conducted in 1944-5, and an opportunity may have been missed here. A. J. Jenkinson and M. Jenkinson (1975) criticised Whitehead for also omitting questions about poetry and plays.

Whitehead's team also conducted follow-up interviews of 576 children (7.35%) about one year after the questionnaire. As the 10+ pupils had largely been dispersed to different schools by then, 177 of these children were not in fact those who had answered the questionnaire. The interviews were valuable in showing the individuality of a child's reading interests, the diversity of book provision in different schools, and the importance of informed and concerned teachers in fostering voluntary reading. On the subject of book provision Whitehead concluded that "Availability in school plays an important though not exclusive role in determining which books children read" (page 281). A positive correlation of .66 between the number of times a book was read and the number of schools it was available in was found.

Whitehead's findings on unfinished and re-read books are also of interest, as the present study found avid readers more likely to finish and more likely to re-read their books than non-avid readers. There are no exactly comparable figures, but Whitehead's older children were more likely (though not significantly) to finish, perhaps because they have gained skill in finding suitable books, or perhaps because they have gained persistence. Books from school

sources were rejected significantly more often, and this is interpreted as showing a need to 'weed out' unsuitable stock in schools. There may well be, however, more pressure in a school to choose and begin a book than outside.

On re-reading Whitehead noted the high proportion: about 20% of books overall had been read before, although the practice declines with age. Girls re-read more than boys but the difference is not as striking as that reported by Terman and Lima (1925).

Finally, Whitehead's study makes various recommendations. Schools should seek out non-readers and try to encourage them. They should buy both quality and non-quality children's fiction, and also some non-fiction, should use library lessons and class libraries as well where needed. A school bookshop should be set up, and teachers should try to be as knowledgeable as possible about children's books so that the right one can be recommended at the right time. More research should be done, both large and small-scale, into children's reading tastes and how they change over time. Some of the studies carried out recently (e.g. Heather 1981) owe their origins to this last recommendation.

Children and Their Books also influenced the present research, in that several of the items in the Primary Questionnaire (Chapter 3) were similar to Whitehead's, as was the period of time (four weeks) over which book titles had to be recalled. This approach, however, proved unsatisfactory (see Chapter 3 summary) and was abandoned in the Secondary Questionnaire.



In the same year as Whitehead's report on work in England and Wales, Maxwell (1977) reported on 5000 pupils aged from 8 to 15 in Scotland. Half of them were followed from the fourth to the sixth year of the primary school and the other half from Primary 7 to Secondary 2. They came from a balanced sample of 15 secondary schools and their 58 feeder primaries, and their progress was monitored using the Edinburgh Reading Tests (Educational Institute of Scotland 1972). Maxwell writes that "...differences in pupils' ability and home background far outweighed differences in teaching practices in determining progress and attainment in reading" and that "Good readers coming from low social backgrounds and poor readers receiving little encouragement at home were particularly at risk". Half the good readers (defined as having a score one standard deviation above the sample mean in Stage 3 of the Edinburgh Reading Test) and three-quarters of the poor readers (one SD below) failed to make any progress in their reading status.

Maxwell also investigated leisure reading, and his figures confirm the decline in the percentage of non-book-readers between P4 and P7, and then the increase in S1 and S2, while the percentage of those who read no magazines, comics or newspapers decline from P4 to P7 and then stabilize. Pupils had been told to list their out-of-school reading for a period of seven days, and those who had scored higher on the reading tests listed more books, and more ephemera, but the difference was much less marked for ephemera. Maxwell concludes by recommending (page 143) that "the teaching of reading in both primary and secondary

schools should be accompanied by judicious interest by teachers in pupils' leisure reading, regardless of its literary quality."

Norris et al 1979

Norris, Chapman and Moylan (1979) studied an age-group similar to Maxwell's in order to find out its reading preference in fiction. 319 children of 8+ and 307 of 11+ were tested to ascertain the categories or types of book they liked, and somewhat smaller numbers assessed passages to reveal preferred character and content factors within the stories. There were equal numbers of boys and girls, from eight schools.

The subjects were presented with mock books, consisting of an illustration and a title page, in twelve categories (myth, fairy tale, fantasy etc.) In format all the books were similar to each other, and they were shown to the children in pairs so that a preference for one could be stated each time, until all had been seen. For the younger children, the sex difference was significant at  $p = .01$ , the boys preferring Space Fiction and Historical Adventure, which the girls put last, while the girls rated first and second the Fairy story and Pony story, which the boys put twelfth and tenth respectively. At 11+ both sexes put the Supernatural story, "The Haunted Village", first.

For the factors within the stories, those with a reading age at least eighteen months below their chronological age were eliminated.

From children's books passages were chosen which contained some 5 character factors (boy, girl, man, woman, animal) and 9 content factors (description, excitement, bravery, sentiment, a moral, conversation, action, narrative

and humour). Each subject read twenty passages and gave each one of four 'liking' comments (+2, +1, -1, -2). The boys were much more critical than the girls; at 8+ the former gave a mean three passages a minus score, and at 11+ a mean nine passages were disliked. The younger girls, however, disliked nothing, and the older ones were only negative about three passages. The boys tended generally to differentiate more than the girls, and strongly disliked the factors 'girl', 'a moral' and 'sentiment'; they did not however react to an adult female character in the same way. Both sexes liked 'excitement', 'animal' and 'humour', and indeed at 11+ the sex differences were much less marked.

Barker-Lunn (1970) discusses possible reasons for these divergent interests in junior school children. At an earlier age, however, these sex differences can still be found. Gray (1981) reports that 96 schools were randomly selected from all the primary and preparatory schools in Northern Ireland and 899 children (433 boys and 466 girls) randomly chosen from within them. The four to six year old subjects were just beginning to learn to read, and an individually administered picture test was used to assess their thematic content preference. The girls tended to be interested in themes that were also found in their reading schemes, but the boys were not, preferring violence and adventure both in their rankings of the pictures and their own drawings of what they liked to read about. It is interesting to speculate how such different preferences arise so early in life; presumably some part is played by parents, whose influence on much older children is discussed next.

### O'Rourke 1979

In 1979 in the USA William O'Rourke published a limited-scale investigation into an aspect of voluntary reading, called Are Parents an Influence on Adolescent Reading Habits? The subjects were 150 ninth-graders, each with one of their parents, and the Quantitative Inventory of the Inventory of Reading Experiences measured how much they read, in ten categories. No significant correlation between parent and student were shown. The test apparently asked if the respondents thought they were rapid readers, or had good comprehension, rather than actually measuring these factors. There were significant correlations established, however, between students and their parents on 'use of books', 'use of libraries' and 'the mechanics of reading'. One would expect parents' habits to influence children on library use, both as models and because many children can only visit libraries when their parents either take them or support the visit by providing fares etc. Having parents who read library books also correlated with heavier reading amongst 10+ and 12+ children in Whitehead's survey, and a paper by E. A. Betts (1961) reviews other earlier work on adult reading and its effect on pupil achievement.

### Cole and Gold 1979

Reading in America - 1978 (Cole and Gold, 1979) contains the results of the BISG study of adult reading habits already mentioned, as well as a summary of a 1978 survey on reading and library use, conducted by the Gallup Organisation. Heavy readers tend to have had a longer education and be more affluent than non-readers. They are more likely to be socially active, to have children and even to have more children than non-book-readers, and if

women, they are more likely to have jobs. They are more able to read flexibly, stopping and starting at odd moments during different times of the day, and C. B. Weinberg comments (page 14) that "this is perhaps one of the clues to the puzzle of how they come to watch so much television at the same time as they are reading a book."

Another recent report is Unesco's Promoting Voluntary Reading for Children and Young People (Irving 1980) which emphasises the importance of voluntary reading and provides guidelines for teacher-training courses and practical suggestions for promoting reading in schools. Other ideas for improving motivation are expressed in Bamberger 1972a, 1972b and 1977, and in the last mentioned study the author describes the Austrian Children's Book Club which he founded.

#### Greaney 1980

The next investigation has important implications for methodology. Vincent Greaney (1980) reports that 720 pupils in Eire aged eleven plus filled in diaries reporting all their leisure-time activities over a three day period. The diaries were marked out in half hour periods, from 3 to 11pm on the Tuesday and Thursday, and from 8am to 11pm on Sunday. They were filled in on the day following, without the children being aware that information about reading was being sought. 44% did not read any books during the three days, but this does not of course mean that they never read a book. Greaney claims that the percentage of time spent reading is a more sensitive measure than number of books read, and so it is, for the latter ignores variation in reading speed, length of difficulty of book, and whether the book was finished or not. But a three day period is

not really enough to establish a child as a reader or not, even at one particular moment in time. "I couldn't put it down" reflects a common experience; while in the grip of an exciting book a child might well read for 20% of available leisure time, but having finished, read nothing for a few days. (Equally, extent of reading varies during school holidays, in both directions, and possibly at different times of year as other competing activities come into season.)

200 of the design sample subjects were not in the achieved sample, a relatively high proportion perhaps; we are not told how many of these had been absent from school on one or more of the three days. On average the children spent 5% of their available leisure time in voluntary reading, 62% of which was devoted to books, 31% to comics and 7% to newspapers. Multiple regression analyses revealed that most of the explained variation in time devoted to books was accounted for by a combination of these variables: sex (girls read more), reading attainment (an Irish standardised test of vocabulary and comprehension was given), school location (city/town/rural), library membership and ordinal position in family (first-born read more). Nine other variables were considered but their contribution was much less. Of these major factors, school location is the only one that is rather unexpected; the other four are supported by Whitehead's findings. (Surprisingly, Greaney only mentions Whitehead's interim 1975 report, rather than the final work.)

For comic reading even less of the variation in time (8% rather than 22.9%) was explained by the combined 14 factors. Whereas girls were found to spend more time reading books, the reverse was true for comics. Comic readers tended to have higher reading attainment than non-comic readers, and to live where only one TV channel was available. The latter finding may support the hypothesis already quoted (Himmelweit 1958, Schramm et al 1961) that comics and TV fulfil the same needs. It is interesting that 33.25% of the total leisure reading was carried on in bed at night, when there was no competition from TV. This finding is supported by Gorman et al (1981) and echoes the impression given by the interviews (Chapter 3) in the present study.

Greaney makes several valuable methodological points about how researchers in this field should proceed. "A multivariate study in which possible relevant variables are considered together, rather than a series of separate univariate studies, is required", he writes (page 356), and he also points out that leisure reading is not homogenous; book readers have different characteristics from comic readers. He argues in favour of the diary as an instrument for gathering this kind of data, suggesting that estimating the number of books read is a crude and less appropriate measure because of the variation in length of different books; an assessment of the amount of total leisure time spent reading is more sensitive.

Greaney's study was a careful one, even though its emphasis is on our present inadequate understanding of the variables associated with voluntary reading rather than on providing any major advance. In a similar way, although J. Ingham's Books and Reading Development (1981a) was inconclusive in respect of its main hypothesis, it shed light on many of the factors involved and illustrated a different research methodology. Ingham studied one year group (357 children) of ten year olds in four middle schools in Bradford over a period of three years, from 1976 to 1979. The schools were paired, one 'inner city' and one 'outer city': although Ingham admits that the matching was not perfect, the provision of control schools was an improvement on the design of the New Zealand 'Book Flood' reported in Elley, Cowie and Watson (1975). The two experimental schools were given an increased stock of nearly 9000 books (given by publishers and by Bradford Libraries). Children in all four schools were asked to fill in a Reading Record Form each time they chose a book for voluntary reading, and the Edinburgh and Schonell Reading Tests were also administered.

The experimental hypothesis was that the increased availability of books would improve reading skills, but in the event all children registered higher reading ages (Schonell and Schonell 1950). They were all, according to their teachers made more aware of titles, series, authors and what was involved in choosing a book. In the outer city experimental school fewer books in total were read, by fewer authors and over a narrower range of titles, than in its control school. The reverse happened in the other pair



of schools, thus rendering the experiment inconclusive with regard to the hypothesis that a wider choice of books is associated with children reading more. In the outer city experimental school, however, children reported less time being made available for personal, private reading in school, and less access to informed and enthusiastic teaching staff, in the second and third years than in the first year of the study. The children were taught English largely by specialists in other subjects in their Fourth year, through shortage of staff; the Head of English was also acting as Deputy Head that year, and the headmaster himself was doubtful about the value of silent reading. It is suggested that these factors may have been responsible for the decline in reading. Ingham comments: "Books need to be in the hands of teachers who have themselves experienced the pleasure that can be gained from literature and who believe in communicating that joy to the children for whom they are responsible" (page 96).

Ingham also found that children chose books more successfully (i.e. they enjoyed and finished them) when they knew something of the book beforehand - they had had an extract read aloud, had read the blurb, knew other books in the series or by the same author - than when they judged merely by the title and cover. (This finding is supported in the present study.) This informed choosing is particularly necessary for less able readers, who need to know what they are taking on before they begin, tend to lack reading stamina, and need positive reinforcement if they are to persist. As one child in the study commented, "Reading is very educational and enjoyable if you are confident enough". (page 129). The researcher herself remarks, "The less able

reader has to invest a great deal of effort in broaching a new author"(page 99). This is why the series of books is so popular. Nevertheless, all readers of this age are helped if they are shown strategies for choice.

Ingham found, as others have done, that class readers were often disliked, perhaps because they were someone else's taste and often took, in class, a long time to read. She says that children should be taken to school libraries as well as encouraged to use class collections, and that they should have a double period of silent reading a week. A common complaint was that it was impossible to "get into" a book when time for reading was short, irregular and infrequent. As regards the popularity of authors, Roald Dahl was almost as much read by these ten to thirteen year olds as Enid Blyton, despite the fact that fewer copies of Dahl's books - one sixth of the number - had been supplied and he has written fewer titles.

In some ways the most illuminating part of Ingham's study is the report of the interviews in Chapter Five. Six infrequent and fourteen avid readers were selected and interviewed at home in the presence of parents. They had been chosen because the Reading Record Form information, the child him or herself, the parent and the teacher all agreed on the validity of the epithet. The 'infrequents' were all from large families with four or more children; four of the six had been designated in need of remedial help at some time; five had been involved in truancy; they tended to 'play out' rather than at home. Their IQ range was 76 to 99. The 'avids' had IQs from 92 to 128. With the removal of one pupil the two IQ ranges would have been discontinuous so that one has to doubt the author's suggestion that

intelligence had not a substantial part to play in the difference between the two groups. Ten of the fourteen were either first-born or only children. They tended to have indoor hobbies.

The interviewing procedure was largely a matter of letting the parent and child speak for themselves, with occasional prompts, rather than asking specific questions. Parents of avid readers remarked on the 'terrier-like' curiosity and their maturity. They seemed to respect their children's independent opinions and needs. All but one of the fourteen had learned to read, at least in part, before going to school. They had all been told stories or read to as children. They had been talked to from birth, as a pleasure rather than as a duty; half of them wrote for pleasure also, composing stories and poems for themselves. Their parents, as well as other significant adults in their lives such as neighbours and grandparents, were likely to read, and to reflect on the value of what they read. The parents tended to want the avid readers to do better in life than they had themselves. Although they did not feel the book flood experiment had affected their children, they were pleased that it had happened. (Ingham says later that she thinks the experiment had most influence on capable but reluctant readers).

The 'avid' readers themselves preferred to buy books rather than to borrow them, so that they could read them again and again. They watched more TV, selectively, than the infrequent readers, but were able to cut themselves off if necessary and read while it was on. This ability has already been mentioned in connection with adults in Cole and Gold (1979). The avid readers were generally more active; in

comparison the infrequent seemed purposeless. The 'avid' children seemed to have an internal locus of control; the 'infrequent' readers felt hopeless, helpless and passive, affected by events they could not influence.

Just as illuminating are the reasons given for book choice, listed as Appendices 3 and 4 to Ingham (1980). The comments come from the Reading Record Form, which pupils filled in partly when they chose a book from a school or classroom library and partly when they had finished the book. (The book form used in the present investigation is an adaptation of this form.) Pupils who read books from home, or from public libraries, were also encouraged to use these forms, although it is unlikely that all did. The form brought out once again the importance of peer group recommendation in book choice; such recommendation was less likely to lead to disappointment than that by an adult.

The Reading Record Form was also felt to have an effect itself. Ingham comments: "Introducing the Reading Record Form into schools in itself improved the children's awareness of books and authors." This increased awareness was not measured objectively, but it is a result one might expect. One of the objectives of the present study was to find out whether children who used a version of the Reading Record Form actually read more books over a six week period than others: the results of a controlled experiment, described in Chapter 6, lead one to conclude that they do not.

Nevertheless, others besides Ingham have suggested that the Form might be more than just a record. Baum (1983), who used an adapted version for 7 8 and 9 year-olds over a term, writes "One especially pleasing outcome was the added

interest in books" (page 167) though he gives no evidence for this judgement. He also felt that the Reading Record Form showed that "some children were not choosing books at the appropriate level" (page 166), a finding which supports the discussion on poor choosing strategies in Chapter 6. Ravenscroft (1981) records the same impression, finding that 18 children of 10+, choosing from a large school library, tended to pick books whose readability was higher than their own reading ages.

#### Southgate et al 1981

Increased research interest in reading after the initial stages is reflected in the Schools Council Project Extending Beginning Reading (Southgate et al, 1981). This studied the teaching of reading to average ability seven to nine year olds in 119 schools around Manchester, and consequently the bulk of the findings are not strictly relevant here. Some of Southgate's comments (Southgate 1981) are of interest, however. "Some children did very much more personal reading than others and this was not necessarily related to reading ability. For example, in two first year classes in the same school the number of story books children read on their own, in one year, ranged from 2 to 84." Furthermore: "The average number of story books read per year by children in different classes showed wide divergences, which would seem to indicate that encouragement of personal reading by the teacher is a vital factor" (page 12).

In the report itself the researchers conclude that more boys than girls like non-fiction, that all like humour in their books, and that the older and better readers like excitement and adventure. They suggest that teachers should have fewer but longer sessions with individual children than

they do now, to assess their progress, talk about books, help plan their reading, and to encourage them to use the strategies the fluent readers used.

42% of these First and Second year juniors had only 1 - 1.5 hours of silent reading time in school per week, and 72% had between 1 and 2.5 hours, largely in short sessions. Moreover, the majority of books in the classroom and school libraries were non-fiction rather than fiction. Most First year children had chosen stories which were for them at 'instructional' or even 'frustration' level in the terms used by McCracken (1969). Even in the Second year 4% of the children were making 6% or more errors when reading aloud. The researchers conclude that either there were not enough suitable books in the schools's libraries, or that the pupils received insufficient guidance on choosing. The latter idea is a particularly interesting suggestion and is further developed in the present investigation.

1981 was also the year in which two other reports of major interest to students of this field were published, an indication in itself of how interest has grown in recent years.

#### Heather 1981

Young People's Reading by Pauline Heather (1981) is a longitudinal study of the leisure reading habits of sixty pupils, each interviewed once a term over five terms, between the ages of thirteen and fifteen. 37 were boys and 23 girls, being six children from each of ten schools in Sheffield and N. E. Derbyshire. One of the aims of the investigation was to explore the reasons for the general decline in reading between these ages, as suggested by Whitehead (1977). Although the numbers of books read and

the amount of time spent reading decreased over the period, there was no decline in the numbers of pupils reading - indeed, more started than stopped. Nor was there any marked decline in magazine reading, so the author concluded that some of the reasons given by the subjects, such as lack of time and having more homework, were not valid. Indeed there was no significant correlation between the amount of time spent doing homework or watching TV and time spent reading.

It should be said that most of the data was arrived at by interviewing the pupils, who also kept reading diaries; such factors as time spent reading, doing homework or watching TV are their own estimates, unsubstantiated by any objective evidence. Heads of English in the ten schools were also interviewed, and as a result Heather concludes that pupils were more likely to read books if they attended a school which had class libraries, a school bookshop or club, silent reading lessons, a qualified librarian and library lessons. Readers also tended to have reading parents, and, less significantly, to have a father in a non-manual occupation. Although girls were heavier readers than boys, a similar proportion (about 15%) of both sexes were non-readers.

The major finding of the investigation was that the amount of time spent reading fluctuated considerably at each termly interview. The school holidays often disrupted the pattern causing most to read less and a few more. The subjects' reasons for fluctuations, as well as those already mentioned, included the pressure of exams, changing hobbies and interests, seasonal activities, and family commitments, both long and short-term. The reports of the interviews give a salutary reminder of the importance of the 'impulse

read', summed up in the comment "It was lying around at home so I read it." The significance of chance gifts, purchases and borrowings, particularly for the less avid readers, is supported by the interviews reported in the present study.

Often it is the verbatim comments of subjects, as recorded in, for example, both Ingham's and Heather's studies, that make vivid and credible a statistic or a situation.

Gorman et al 1981, 1982a, 1982b, 1983

Several such comments illuminate the four major reports by Gorman et al (1981, 1982a, 1982b and 1983), but their chief value does not lie therein. Set up in 1975 to monitor pupil attainment, the Assessment of Performance Unit has initiated surveys of language, mathematical development and science in primary and secondary schools. The first and second primary language survey covered a national sample of about 14,000 eleven year olds from 900 schools; the first and second secondary language survey covered more than 10,000 fifteen year olds. The National Foundation for Educational Research published out the surveys, and the wealth of detail in the reports can only be suggested here, but girls tended to achieve higher mean reading and writing scores than boys at both ages, and there were some significant regional variations in performance. The reading tests used a series of illustrated booklets and were notable for the wide range of tasks set (including use of an index, following instructions and summarizing information) and a much more imaginative approach than most current reading tests reveal. However, only the results in Chapter Three of the 1981 report, on attitude to reading, can be described in detail here, because of their influence on the present study.



Children were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with various statements. There was a consistent but low significant correlation between reading attainment and attitude to reading, although only 10% of the variance was thus explained. Girls were slightly more positive towards silent reading and less negative towards reading aloud to somebody, an activity which was disliked by nearly half the sample. Significantly more boys agreed with "I can't often find a book I want to read", although there was no significant difference between the sexes on "I am not interested in books". Yet there was a  $-.30$  correlation between the latter statement and reading performance scores. 59% disagreed with "I don't usually read at home". 94% enjoyed reading books, but significantly more boys than girls preferred comics to books, while 1/3 agreed they read comics at home more than books. Significantly more boys than girls expressed positive attitudes to comics in both these statements.

The children were also asked to complete various statements about reading. 46% of the responses to "The thing I like best about reading is ..." implied enjoyment; 30% referred to self-improvement, equally as further knowledge and as related to the requirements of school; 12.3% saw reading as an activity to fill in time and 11.2% as an activity involving freedom and independent choice. In response to the stem "The place I like to be when I am reading is ..." 17.3% referred to quiet, peacefulness and a lack of disturbance; and of those who mentioned a specific place, nearly all (79.5%) referred to home, and 62.6% to their bed or bedrooms, which seemed associated with such peace, quiet, solitude and comfort.

The children's criteria for selection of books were implied in their responses to the stem "I wish that books .."and "I disliked books that ...". 28.9% disliked a lack of excitement, just as 30.6% had wished books had more action or were more thrilling. 11.4% disliked disturbing subject matter (i.e. war or horror or violence) and 9.3% wanted more humour. In contrast to the study by Yarlott and Harpin (1971) of older pupils, 78% registered either very positive or favourable attitudes to poetry; twice as many boys as girls were very negative. The researchers comment that a number of pupils whose level of reading performance was comparatively low, nevertheless found pleasure in reading poetry. Because the responses are so interesting, and in order to compare the results, some of these stem-completion items were also included in the present study, and the findings are discussed in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5.

Two other studies were published in this year, both in volume 33 of the Use of English. One, by Raymond Holt (1981) had as subjects 30 boys and only 22 girls in their Fourth year (ie ten to eleven year olds) at a junior school on the outskirts of a South Yorkshire town. The school's catchment area contains mainly council housing, where live mostly skilled and unskilled workers in equal numbers, but also some managers, some who are unemployed and some self-employed.

Four weeks after the beginning of the Autumn term, the pupils answered a questionnaire similar to Whitehead's. The mean number of books read in the four weeks was 2.65 (2.3 for the boys and 3.13 for the girls). 68% of them were non-quality fiction, 22% quality fiction, and 6% non-fiction

(using Whitehead's categories). Girls read more quality fiction than boys (32% to 12%). 50% of the boys and 59% of the girls had read three or more books, but these included books read in lessons, and many were unfinished. 13% had read no books and five of these seven had above average reading ability.

A small group of seven boys and four girls, who attended weekly sessions with Holt, kept a diary of their reading. None of their fathers read, although some mothers read romance fiction. No child mentioned reading a school book at home. This group read a mean 3.36 books, but left unfinished nearly half (45.9%) of them; it is suggested that this high proportion may have been affected by the fact that in the school time for reading was short and irregular, and books were, in the judgement of the author, badly displayed.

The other study, by J. D. Clench (1981) involved 842 students at ten colleges of further education. They claimed to have read an average of 1.35 books in four weeks, with the males reading more non-fiction (almost one quarter) than the females. Similar sex differences were observed in their choice of periodicals. The full-timers read more than the part-timers (on day release), used the college library more, and were more pro-college in their attitudes.

In 1982 three small-scale investigations into children's voluntary reading, from the Proceedings of the Second British Research Seminar in Children's Literature, (Hunt 1982) indicated the increased interest in the subject despite failing to add a great deal to current knowledge, the findings being very much in line with those of Norris et al (1979) already discussed. Jean Williams (1982) showed

twenty books to thirty eight-year-olds and asked them which they would most like to read and why. Only the boys were, as in other surveys, strongly attracted to non-fiction and to comic-strip books. The topic or theme or plot was, as expected, the most important single factor in influencing decisions, and many children were attracted to books with which they were already familiar. Many of the girls were attracted to books they perceived as being appropriate to their sex, and also tended to prefer those with a humorous element.

A linked study by Wyse (1982) involved sixty eight-year-olds: an interviewer filled in a questionnaire about book choice on the basis of their oral answers. The findings have some relevance to parts of the present study: "The attraction of the cover and some form of familiarity were the main reasons for book choice" and "Of the 22 who chose because they liked the cover, 21 found it not like they expected."

Finally, the third of the papers presented at the seminar, Brown (1982), was a study of forty eleven to fourteen year olds who were followed from the fourth year in the junior school to the third year at secondary school. Merrill Brown interviewed them and administered a questionnaire twice yearly, in June and February. Over the three years the girls' reading (i.e. how many books listed) decreased substantially, while that of the boys fluctuated and was higher each June than in February, for reasons that are unclear. Many read more newspapers and magazines during the last year than in the first, and so may not have necessarily read less overall. Moreover, one cannot assume that because children's reading declines between eleven and four-

teen years that it continues to decline thereafter. Brown classifies her subjects into eight types according to their reading patterns, from non-reader and non-book-reader to very heavy reader, the mean scores of the latter ranging over three years from eleven to thirty books. Other findings were that a greater proportion of books had been borrowed from public libraries and fewer from school libraries as the survey progressed and the pupils became older. This is in line with Squire and Applebee (1968), who indicated that post-primary school students in the UK preferred public libraries to school libraries as the source of books for personal reading. The Knowsley (1983) report, however, which is discussed fully below, conflicts with both Brown, and Squire and Applebee, with an average of 57% of 11 - 13 year olds borrowing only from school libraries over a three month period, and less than 2% using public libraries only. In Brown's study, the influence of friends on book choice also increased with the years. The author stresses that the concern of an interested adult helped all the children to go on reading, and comments that the influence of the school, and English teachers in particular, is crucial for the less able and for those without reading models and guidance from home.

In the same year, in Towards Independent Reading Neville and Pugh (1982) made the same point (page 89) but specifically related it to the issue of book choice and the need to be taught choosing strategies. "Readers need experience in sizing up books and thus those who read little may need some tactful teacher guidance in choosing books. In this way the children's disappointment in books that look very interesting or exciting but are still too difficult can

be reduced." (Not all adults are much better off. Spenceley (1980) asked 100 people borrowing 135 serious modern 'literary' novels in Sheffield libraries why they had chosen the book(s). For 37% the reason was merely "It looked interesting", but when another group returning such novels were asked their reactions, 60% of those who had chosen on this basis had not enjoyed the book).

Neville and Pugh used the Dunham (1960) attitude scale, devised in the course of an investigation in which Dunham found that although belonging to a remedial class tended to improve reading ability it did not improve a poor attitude to reading. In Towards Independent Reading Neville and Pugh reported significantly greater variation in boys' attitude to reading than girls'. As boys also vary more in reading ability, there may be an association. B.F. Skinner (1977) writes "We must have competence in reading if it is to bring us pleasure and satisfaction; the real reinforcers then are the books themselves. It follows that teachers should work toward the time when the natural reinforcers will be built up." In connection with this, Greene and Lepper (1974) suggested that early extrinsic rewards tend to lessen children's subsequent intrinsic interest in an activity. Richard Bamberger (1964) may be making a similar point when he writes "Children feel that what they have acquired from their own reading is not the same as what has been forced on them by teachers and other educators from without, but is rather something they have worked out themselves from within."

The Knowsley (1983) report, mentioned earlier, emphasises further the problems of readers who cannot choose books with sufficient competence to build up the "natural"

reinforcement, the pleasure the books give. A random sample of 180 11 - 13 year olds, 10 boys and 10 girls from each of the first three years in three schools, was chosen. All the schools were less than one mile from the public library, and all had school libraries of their own. The pupils had their tickets tagged, and without their knowledge for three months any book they borrowed, from school or public library, was noted. 82% took out at least one during the observation period, but this mean figure conceals a decline from 93% of 1st Year pupils to 73% of 3rd Years. Some of the 18% who borrowed nothing were long-term absentees, but not all; it was noticed that the school with fewest non-borrowers (6.6%) held library lessons for all 1st to 3rd Year pupils. There was also a decline (as recorded in all comparable surveys) in the number of books borrowed per pupil over the three year-groups, from a mean of 8 to 4.5.

The librarians who wrote the report also analyse the ratio of fiction to non-fiction and the types of fiction read. At the end of the three months, they interviewed each subject and found that in comparison to a total of 1129 books which had been borrowed, 526 books were claimed as having been either bought or received as presents during the same period, the proportion of purchases to gifts being roughly the same.

The most interesting finding from the point of view of the present study, however, is the high failure or rejection rate. Between one quarter and three quarters of the fiction books borrowed by the ten most prolific (sic) readers were not finished. "A survey of the ten most prolific readers showed a picture of persistent borrowing rather than pur-

poseful reading. All pupils found it difficult to unearth fiction they could enjoy and in general didn't know how to browse" (page 15). (A valuable distinction is made here, too late for the present study to adopt, between not finishing non-fiction, perhaps because only part of the book is relevant to one's needs, and rejecting fiction. In the latter case, unless perhaps the book is a collection of short stories, rejection presumably implies some kind of failure; to include non-fiction that is unfinished may distort the data.) Thus once again, in this last piece of research to be discussed, the difficulty children have in choosing what they want to read is stressed.



## SUMMARY

There is a well-documented decline in book-reading between the ages of 10 and 14, the reasons for which are not clear. Within this range, there are clear differences between the sexes, in that girls tend to stay readers for longer than boys, to read less non-fiction, and to have a more positive attitude. Both sexes prefer books containing adventure and excitement. The individuality of a child's reading interests, his or her 'unique reading personality' (Chambers) has been stressed, and this has led to the idea that young people's own likings should be paramount when books are selected for them, and that much of what used to be prescribed for them in schools was too remote from their concerns and too difficult. It is evidenced in support of this that class readers are often disliked or barely tolerated.

It appears that voluntary leisure reading improves reading skills. The quality and amount of reading is associated with higher fluency, as is a positive attitude to reading, but only a small proportion of the variance is explained by this correlation. It is clear however that reading can be an acquired taste, and is stimulated by easy availability of suitable books and the provision of time and opportunity both for discussing books with friends and teachers and for reading itself. There are indications that the keen reader will create these conditions in any case, but that the less avid are heavily dependent on haphazard recommendations or gifts for the little reading they do.

The research reported here led to the conclusion that most children found it difficult to choose fiction well, although avid readers were probably better at this than infrequent readers. It was decided therefore to investigate several aspects of voluntary reading and the nature of 'avidity', with especial reference to the reasons given for choosing particular books. While adapting Ingham's Reading Record Form (1980) for this purpose, it was thought useful to explore her suggestion that its use improved awareness of books and titles. If it did so, such increased awareness and discussion amongst pupils should lead to more peer recommendation and perhaps to more reading, in which case it would be a very practicable method whereby schools could both record and stimulate at the same time.

It was noticed, finally, that although the association with voluntary reading of such variables as social class, sex, age, intelligence, attitude and reading attainment has been examined quite often, there was in the research literature no study of children's personality. It seemed that such a study might explain another small part of the variation in reading habits, and that it might also throw light on what voluntary reading involved, and thus on what the obstacles were for some. With this understanding, and with a grasp of why and how books are chosen, teachers might be better able to encourage reading.

## CHAPTER TWO : WHY WE READ

Before proceeding to an account of the first stage of the research (Chapter 3) it is worth exploring, briefly, some much wider issues, partly because the investigation of why children read particular books presupposes views on why people read at all, and partly to explain some of the theoretical issues behind the term 'personality'. This chapter is necessarily therefore more of an essay than a report, and in the nature of an interpolation to the main argument. It falls into three main sections, discussing

- a) the purposes of reading, both its function in a society and in a particular individual
- b) the actual process involved
- and c) the concept and assessment of personality.

### READING PURPOSES

Evidence to indicate the function of reading in a society comes not only from the psychological and educational field but also from historical studies of the growth of literacy in different communities. It is inappropriate to review this evidence here, but it is clear that there are many different reasons for higher literacy rates. There are also different views: the introduction of the printing press to England in 1477 has been seen as both the cause and the result of increased literacy. Reading development may be for economic purposes : illiteracy is associated with poverty and a high birthrate in developing countries and it is said that an advanced industrial society needs its population to have a minimum of twelve years' schooling for successful functioning. At other times literacy may confer status and access to what is seen as a superior culture, as Latin used to in the UK and as English does today in some countries. More negatively, it may

be the means of avoiding being cut off from one's own local culture, or of retaining a sense of national identity. It may be encouraged by the influence of religious faith as a liberating factor which tends to enable readers to make independent judgements, or seen as a form of social control (Blampain 1979).

It is however rather a two-edged weapon, in that it is difficult to limit reading achievement to a narrowly-defined functional literacy. The term itself shows an awareness that the rudiments of reading and writing are no longer enough, and recent research has shown much more interest, as already mentioned, in the development of higher reading skills and in reading for particular purposes. This concern with the quality of literacy may also be seen in new training initiatives for 14 to 18 year olds in the educational system in England and Wales, and it is suggested (Pugh 1984) that it is the tradition of liberal education in this country which has led to insufficient stress on the practical usefulness of literacy. The same paper, "Perspectives on higher levels of functional reading", presented to the Goethe Institut Colloquium on Aspects of Adult Literacy in the UK and the Federal Republic of Germany, discusses the information overload which is a current problem in developed countries and indicates ways forward.

Some of the purposes of reading mentioned above operate both within an individual and in social groupings. Others relate more to a particular reader and his intentions at the time. Some of the immediate reasons can be inferred from the list of five types of reading given by Pugh (1978) who suggests that readers need to be conscious of their motives for reading and the speeds and strategies appropriate for those motives.

The types of reading given are : to skim, to scan, to search read, to read receptively and to read responsively.

Beyond these immediate reasons are somewhat wider ones. One criticism of the term 'functional literacy' is that it may encourage a narrow view of literacy as being job-related and mainly of value for utilitarian reasons. The bulk of reading reported in this survey (Chapters 3 to 6), as in others, is of fiction, even amongst boys; the bulk of library borrowing (Mann 1982) is of fiction. Such reading may, however, also be functional in a broad sense, and related to considerations of status and access to culture as well as for enjoyment. Unnecessary polarisation across the spectrum of reading purposes into 'useful' and 'recreational' might impede our understanding of their variety and interdependence.

One way of finding out about why people read is, of course, to ask them. Chapter 4 reports on why the children in this study say they like reading : in sharply descending order of importance, they say they read for enjoyment, self-improvement, to fill in time, for the independence conferred and because of its usefulness. Nevertheless they are vague about what creates their pleasure, and since this is by far the largest category (59%) it is important to attempt some analysis of the reading process itself, in the expectation that this may clarify why people read. This very difficult area of study can be approached through a brief account of the current state of English as a subject.

#### THE READING PROCESS

The difficulties are illustrated by the fact that even the term reading process itself is used in different ways by, for example, literary critics and psycholinguists. Moreover, there is a lack of consensus on the basic aims of classroom

English. This is partly for historical reasons, summarised by Pugh (1980), but that the problems persist today is seen in the titles of recent contributions to the debate, as "Crisis in English teaching" (Hollingworth 1983) and English within the arts (Abbs 1983). The different approaches were analysed by Dixon (1967) and his formulation, although now rather outdated by developments in higher education, has been widely quoted. He suggests (page 13) that there exist in essence three models: the skills model, the cultural heritage model and the personal growth model. If this is so, then the approach adopted must influence the view taken of why we read.

This does not mean, of course, that purpose in voluntary reading is the same as the general aim of the subject as a whole, or the rationale for studying it. It may be that as consideration of the quality of the books tackled seems relatively unimportant to them, teachers who emphasise voluntary reading tend towards the 'personal growth' model (although it seems that few espouse one of the three to the exclusion of the others). On the other hand, teachers of younger secondary school children may be more likely to adhere to the 'skills' model, broadly interpreted and treating literature as part of reading skill. Teachers of sixth formers may favour the 'cultural heritage' model somewhat more, sometimes transformed to allow for a version of the newer critical practices discussed in higher education.

In the universities the debate has had a sharper edge. Post-structuralists, Marxists, phenomenologists and others have challenged the prevailing liberal-humanist elitist view of literature, stressing the role of the reader rather than

that of the text/author, and drawing attention to the use of books as agents of social control. Although the challengers have not yet overthrown the literary establishment, their methods of analysis have been influential in many ways, in schools as well as on the review pages and the podium. These methods, which cannot be adequately summarised in a few lines, stem from a different view of the relationship between the author in his social context and the reader, and a different view of what happens when we read. It is the latter we are primarily concerned with now, and the approach has to be an eclectic one. This is because there have been few guides in this problematic field, so that in the absence of a map one has to rely on different theoretical viewpoints from which to glimpse the terrain.

One viewpoint is that afforded by D. W. Harding who, in a series of seminal articles (1937, 1968, 1971) began to examine the nature of the processes involved in reading fiction. He analysed the ideas of 'identification', 'identity loss', 'wish-fulfilment' and the vicarious experiences one has when absorbed in a novel. He uses the concept of the reader as onlooker or spectator, a notion which has some explanatory power, but which makes reading seem less interactive than it is, and makes the author the only generator of the text. He writes "Looking on ... does enlarge the range, not of the onlooker's experience but of his quasi-experience and partial understanding" (Harding 1977 page 70).

Thus, according to this analysis, as one reads a work of fiction, one 'watches' people and events, as though one were an invisible presence - a mind looking on rather as the creator himself, the author, must look on his creation. Indeed Benton



(1978) has argued that reading and writing a story both involve similar types and phases of mental activity. One may feel for the characters in their predicaments; whether one really feels 'with' them is more debatable. It is difficult to argue that at any moment one actually believes that one is in the story, or that the events are real. In the same way, someone who watches a film always knows that it is only a film, however emotionally involving. Yet there are many levels of involvement, and at the deeper ones Coleridge's "willing suspension of disbelief" is perhaps the most appropriate description of what happens. There is some evidence (Squire 1964) that those who are totally involved as they read make more, and more perceptive literary judgments than those less so. Most readers, however, 'flicker' in attention between commitment to the world of the book and a critical evaluation of it, from moment to moment. Noble (1975) asked 50 13 - 15 year old boys how often they forgot who or where they were when watching TV or reading books, and found that 3/4 felt this identity loss at some time when reading, while fewer experienced it while watching cinema films or different kinds of TV programmes.

One reason for the popularity of the rather misleading term 'identification' is that it does reflect a common experience, though one I would prefer to call 'recognition'. A character may show reactions one knows in oneself; a situation described may remind the reader of similar experience. An eleven year old commented in the course of this research, "When the boy in the story (Operation Icarus by Richard Cooper) sat down at the computer and felt all its power, ready under his fingertips, I remembered I'd felt just like that." Thus one feels, momentarily, identical with the

character or event. Pat D'Arcy (1973), quotes (vol. 1 p.9) from Dorothy White (1956): "The experience makes the book richer and the book enriches the personal experience. I am astonished at the early age this backward and forward flow between books and life takes place." The reaction 'I know that' or 'I remember that' or 'I've felt that' tends to validate the book for the reader and give it more significance. But it also encourages him, as Althusser (1970) and Blampain (1979) point out, to collaborate with whatever ideology it conveys.

It is argued by an American writer on children's literature, Perry Nodelman, (1981) that we encourage children too much to think that books should be about themselves, "that reading is primarily a matter of self-recognition. For children who learn to respond to stories in this way, stories which make identification difficult finally become boring and irrelevant," because self-indulgent wish-fulfilment is impossible in them. Giving as an example of good fiction Paula Fox's The Slave Dancer Nodelman continues "What books like this teach, simply in describing people so different from ourselves and worlds so different from our own, is the limits of self-indulgence and solipsism ... In training children to identify, we sentence them to the solitude of their own consciousness ... we deprive them of the pleasures of genuinely admirable fiction - the ability of carefully chosen words to evoke experiences we have never experienced and to show us lives we have never lived."

There is some truth in this view but it also rather misleadingly implies, just as the term 'spectator' or 'onlooker' does, that reading is somewhat like looking through a window.

In fiction I. A. Richards' protocols (1929) long ago showed that different readers generate different texts, and more recently Holland (1975) from a psychoanalytical viewpoint indicated the defence mechanisms brought into play by Five Readers Reading and the textual details they invented or ignored to support their interpretations. Thus when we read of experiences other than our own, we create situations that become in the mind, like some dreams, almost indistinguishable from our memories of real events. When deeply involved in a book, one is no longer conscious of oneself as a thinker, and through this identity loss we experience our thoughts as concrete realities. Our 'quasi-experience' constitutes, as Gregory says (Meek et al 1977) "alternative possible realities ... for it is only by considering what might be that we can change effectively what is, or predict what is likely to be." Literature contains more experience than one person could ever have, and in this sense too it is a source of knowledge. Almost any experience and reaction can be found and is described and apparently sanctioned by some author. As we look on, then, at these imagined scenes, our affective growth is being shaped and our attitudes influenced as much as they are by objective events in the real world. This may be why Oscar Wilde apparently said "It is what you read when you don't have to that determines what you'll be when you can't help it" (quoted by Blishen 1975 page 24).

Although in this sense the text controls and defines the reader, in another the reader has power over the text; the latter proposes, but the reader disposes, so that a manual, for instance, may be followed word for word, or merely scanned for one particular symbol, or search read, or skimmed for a general

impression - the terms are from Pugh (1978). Iser (1978) likens reading a book responsively to taking part in a conversation, a discussion in which there are assumptions and implications on both 'sides', but only the reader is engaged in constantly re-formulating, modifying and rejecting ideas in a struggle towards constituting a meaning. During this process he may come to a better understanding of how society functions; alternatively he may through articulating possibilities understand more about his own views, in which case the text is acting rather like a screen on which he projects them. Fiction thus enables us to re-interpret our own experiences; as Chambers (1973) says, quoting Richard Hoggart, "Literature ... explores, re-creates and seeks for meanings." I. A. Richards' description of a book as 'a machine to think with' is not so far from this. One might even claim that Macherey's standpoint (1978), "Works of art are processes and not objects" (page 45) is not so very far from Iser's view.

If one returns to Harding again, however, the stress on the importance of the author is still there. He feels that the writer offers to us an evaluation of characters and events which we can accept, be neutral about or reject. He seems to share, and express rather better, Nodelman's opinion that good books are read in a less self-indulgent way than 'popular' fiction. "In literature we can seldom follow the whim of the person we already happen to be: we find our experience set in somebody else's context, and examined within the framework of his values. He is not controllable by us. In the end we must judge him, but not until we have followed his working out of a pattern of perceptions, interests, views of human probability, choices of action, glimpses of consequences. Responding

adequately to a great work means becoming something different from your previous self" (Harding 1971 page 325).

Non-quality fiction, however, seems to adapt itself more to the reader, and can be read in a greater variety of ways. In this sense it may be similar to children's literature, which Blampain (1979) describes as exhibiting relatively crude and obvious devices for social control. Yet subtler indications of a value-system are also pervasive, and "La littérature de jeunesse (est) sous un controle d'autant plus efficace qui'il est indirect et interiorise" (Young people's literature is subject to a control all the more effective in that it is inferential and internalised (own translation): Blampain 1979 page 95). A less skilled reader, of course, may in any case simply not notice the expression of opinions quite contrary to his own.

Non-quality fiction is also perhaps less demanding in that it tends to be read in less detail, even to the extent that sometimes the story is merely an outline to embroider. The text tends to be less self-conscious, 'readerly' rather than 'writerly' in Barthes' terms (Hawkes 1977 page 114). There is little description, and what there is tends to be clearly marked off from the plot-furthering paragraphs, and so is skippable. The plot itself is straightforward in its time-sequence (no confusing flash-backs), its lack of sub-plot and its lack of digression. The method of telling it is also clear and simple: no switching from one narrator to another, no unusual word order or passive voice, no casual 'slipping-in' of a significant detail. The characters are often stereotypes, so that they can be established quickly in the reader's mind at the beginning, and re-established with a single repeated phrase

or tag later in the book or series. This and the clear explanation of the setting in the first few pages reduces the time the reader has to wait, confused, before he or she can 'get into' the story. Aidan Warlow (1977) considers this the most difficult period for an unconfident, inexperienced reader: "It is the real test of the maturity of the reader to see how long he can tolerate this ambivalent period of doubt."

In popular fiction like this the main drive is "What happens next?" and that question impels much of our reading, at any level. Harding wrote (1968): "The ends achieved by fiction and drama are not fundamentally different from those of a great deal of gossip." Stratta, Dixon and Wilkinson (1973) refer to "a variety of second-order experiences constantly being mediated to us through conversations with friends and acquaintances and by means of the spoken and printed word of television, film, newspapers, magazines and so on." We have a need for narrative, for excitement, as has been shown in Chapter One by the demands of the young for 'action'. We also have a need to read of the complexities of life being ordered into a satisfying structure with a neat and just solution. We like the security and predictability of stories which reinforce our own views and attitudes; we can even enjoy having our assumptions challenged and contradicted. We like to be 'taken out of ourselves' by such deep absorption in a book that we lose our burdensome personalities, our wearying consciousness and our constant self-doubt. We seek, as we read, not wish-fulfilment but the chance to formulate and articulate our desires and feelings - Auden's "How can I know what I think till I see what I say?" could be paraphrased as "How can I know what I think till I've read?" We seek knowledge, and non-

fiction supplies information and opinion, while fiction enables us to meet more people, of more different kinds and conditions, than we ever could in life (and even to compare them both to each other and to real characters). We seek comfort: E. M. Forster (1962) writes "Novels, even when they are about wicked people, can solace us; they suggest a more comprehensible and thus more manageable human race, they give us the illusion of perspicacity and power ... In the novel we can know people perfectly, and, apart from the general pleasure of reading, we can find here a compensation for their dimness in life." For all these reasons, we read.

#### READING AND PERSONALITY

These suppositions about the nature of the reading process and its rewards for readers (expressed, moreover, in somewhat rhetorical form) are an eclectic summary of various viewpoints on a notoriously problematical area, and thus lack theoretical cogency as well as empirical evidence. The final section of this chapter deals with a field which is much wider and has been more thoroughly studied.

Definitions of the term 'personality' vary and depend to some extent upon the theoretical orientation adopted, but it is agreed that it is to do with individual differences, excluding (usually) cognitive and physical traits and behaviours. It is known that personality affects learning, and one would therefore expect it to affect reading. The limitations of the survey technique in research are that it can do little more towards establishing why some respondents read more than others than ask them; although, as we have seen, this has value, more objective evidence is needed. In order to go beyond the survey data, therefore, and assess

the psychological characteristics of readers, use was made of a personality test.

There is no attempt here to review the vast literature on personality. It is however necessary to mention some different approaches to its study in order to explain why a factor analysis measure was chosen, and why Cattell's. This is because in choosing a test of personality one is to some extent espousing a view of its essential nature and how it can be assessed, just as the choice of a word recognition reading test rather than a sentence completion one implies a view of what constitutes reading ability. Thus if one were to employ a personality assessment involving the technique of free association, this would imply some adherence to ideographic rather than nomothetic theory, to the clinical rather than the psychometric approach, to the views of Freud and the post and neo-Freudians rather than those of Guilford, Cattell and Eysenck, which have been more directly influential on educational research.

The ideographic approach has sometimes been used for small-scale studies because it tends to generate hypotheses which can then be investigated further. It was not chosen for this survey, however, because it would have been unlikely to have produced any early and readily analysable data and would also have been rather time-consuming for a single researcher.

The time element, incidentally, was significant for the pupils as well. The questionnaires, diaries and other measures had to be administered, as group instruments, in lesson time, and it was estimated that these alone would take about six hours, or the equivalent of two weeks'



lessons in a major subject, during the run-up to school examinations. To insist on much more than this seemed unjustifiable.

The nomothetic approach to personality assessment is represented mainly by Eysenck and Cattell. Guilford established ten factors which Cattell and Gibbons (1968) believe to be the same as ten of Cattell's, and in any case his work has been far less extensively validated. The Eysenck Personality Inventory established only two dimensions, extraversion and neuroticism (psychoticism, a later factor, is only important in psychotics). There is as much supporting evidence for the EPI as for Cattell's test, but it was felt that a wider 'blunderbuss' approach would be more profitable, especially when the early results on extraversion and reading (Chapter 3) were unclear. Moreover, extraversion and neuroticism are said by Cattell to be the same as his second-order factors *extroversion* and *anxiety*, and thus could be investigated in any case if required. A further consideration was that Neville and Pugh (personal communication) had decided not to publish results relating to personality in a 1974 study which included a comparison between Junior EPI and reading scores (NFER test AD) because of problems of administration and, especially, doubts about how well the poor readers among the children could read Eysenck's test.

For these reasons, then, it was decided to use Cattell's approach. This had originally involved a dictionary search for words referring to behaviour, which when pruned of synonyms were listed as 'trait elements'. These traits were then used to rate a small sample of students for

a six month observation period, and correlations and cluster analysis resulted in fifty 'surface traits' which were factor analysed. From this emerged the 'source traits' or primary factors used in the 16 Personality Factor test, the High School Personality Questionnaire and the Children's Personality Questionnaire.

Although the original sample was small, a great deal of work has been done since in administering these tests to large numbers of subjects of different ages, occupations and nationalities. It is not claimed that the measures are culture free, but that since we can only know and express personal characteristics of behaviour through the discriminations of language, all of its possible manifestations in our culture have been included as initial variables. Apart from the observer ratings, data were also obtained from various objective tests (eg of distractibility) and from the questionnaires themselves. The alphabetical list of factors is in order of decreasing importance, with Q1, Q2 etc used for the factors which were derived from responses on paper only without 'life data'.

Cattell has also provided formulae for computing second-order factors from the primary ones, and these are anxiety, exvia, radicalism, tendermindedness and superego. His theory of personality postulates the existence of 'ergs', or innate drives, and 'sentiments', or sets of culturally acquired attitudes. Examples of ergs are mating, assertiveness, fear, 'narcism', pugnacity and protectiveness. Examples of sentiments are self-sentiment, superego, home and school (in children). The theory has no great explanatory power, however, and the test's validity does not depend on it. It

will be seen that Cattell takes a broad view of personality, including intelligence as Factor B rather than asserting a dichotomy between the cognitive and orectic aspects of human experience and behaviour. The test was therefore an appropriate instrument whereby to compare avid and infrequent readers.

Further details of the Children's Personality Questionnaire are provided in Chapter 8, where its administration is described. The present investigation had begun, however, more than a year before, and the results of the first phase are reported in the next chapter.

### CHAPTER THREE : THE PRIMARY QUESTIONNAIRE

### CHAPTER THREE: THE PRIMARY QUESTIONNAIRE

This chapter reports on the first measure, the Primary Questionnaire, the findings of which are then summarised. The final section of the chapter describes the interviews of a sub-group of avid and infrequent readers, and the light thus shed on the Questionnaire design.

#### THE PRIMARY QUESTIONNAIRE

The Primary questionnaire was administered to 80 pupils aged 10-11 (42 boys and 38 girls) in June 1981, when they were in their fourth year at Junior schools A, B, C and D. In the event, it was used as a pilot (following Oppenheim, 1968) for the questionnaires subsequently given to the same pupils a year later in the comprehensive school E where they were bound, but it also provided information of interest in its own right. It was administered by the researcher herself, and all but three pupils answered in their own classrooms. They were told that it was not a test, and that it was important that they should be entirely truthful in their replies, as the answers would help school E, where the researcher is Head of English, to buy the sort of books they liked for the school library.

Pupils were allowed to talk quietly, and to move about on occasion in order to check book titles and authors. One unfortunate effect of this may have been some rivalry among the more 'avid' readers about the number of books and magazines they could list, and some possible influencing of attitudes amongst the infrequent readers by knowledge of how friends had answered. During the Secondary Questionnaires, in the following year, conversation was not allowed.

Question 1: Write your name here

This instruction was included because a pre-pilot version showed that children of this age, in school, accustomed to writing their names on their work, were made rather uneasy by a coding system designed to ensure anonymity, and constantly asked "Where do I put my name?" Ewing and Johnstone (1981) also found that "anonymity was generally seen as unimportant" (page 12) and quote Kennedy and Halinski (1975) as confirming this "in an area of research which is neither intimate nor threatening" in the American context.

Question 2: Do you like reading?

TABLE 3.1 Numbers in the different schools answering "yes" and "no" to Question 2.

<u>School</u>	"Yes"	"No"	<u>Total</u>
A	49	9	58
B	7	1	8
C	11	0	11
D	3	0	3
<u>Total</u>	70	10	80

NS

Of the nine (all boys) from school A who answered "No" to this question, four had originally ticked "Yes" and then changed their minds, an indication perhaps of peer influence.

Question 3: Do you often read any magazines or comics or newspapers?

13 (16.25%) replied "No" to this question, and 67 (83.75%) "Yes", but the thirteen included one 'avid' and one 'near

avid' reader. 102 titles were mentioned altogether, an average of over 4 each for the boys and over 5 each for the girls. The most popular were (in descending order) the Beano, Daily Mirror, Whizzer & Chips, Dandy, Star, Sun, Jackie and Bunty.

Question 4: Are you a member of a public library?

One third (33.75%) replied that they were not, most of these non-members being boys, (17 to 10), although the sex differences were not statistically significant.

Question 5: Have you read a book since half-term? and

Question 6: Write down the titles and authors of all the books you can remember reading since half-term.

Ten percent (seven boys and one girl) replied that they had not read a book since half-term, and these pupils were all interviewed later as part of the sub-group of 'infrequent' readers. 'Half-term' had been four weeks previously, and was given as a helpful milestone for the children as Oppenheim (1968) suggests. Nevertheless, it was suspected that those who listed more than ten books (one boy and four girls) may have exaggerated, particularly in view of such entries as "Secret Seven - all of them" and "Malory Towers - set of five". It is of course quite possible to read all 15 Secret Seven books in four weeks, if available; indeed the researcher knows a nine year old who is currently reading one per night. But when a child knows he or she has completed the series (a collecting urge often present in this age group), it would be very easy to mistakenly include titles that had been read before the specified time period. Moreover, it was not perhaps by chance that as many as eight pupils listed the same number of books (ten) as there were available lines to write on. (They were told to

use the space at the side of the questionnaire if need be). In view of these likely distortions, the corresponding questions in the second questionnaire read "Are you reading a book now?" and "Have you just finished reading a book?" Introspection suggests that this is probably the limit of many people's accurate memory.

Question 7: Have you read any of the books you put down more than once?

Question 8: Did you decide not to finish reading any of the books? and

Question 9: Tick one of the boxes to show where you got the book from.

The sub-group of 'avid' readers, selected on what afterwards proved to be the somewhat shaky basis that they had listed at least ten titles in Q6, had read on average 24% of their books before, as against 14.5% for the group as a whole.

TABLE 3.2 Re-reading amongst avid and non-avid readers

	Avid readers (N=12)	Others	<u>Total</u>
Books read once	101	231	332
Books re-read	32	25	57
<u>Total</u>	133	256	389

Chi squared = 13.18 (corrected)                      p<.001  
df = 1



The "infrequent" readers did not affect these figures since all ten had read no books since half-term. The higher rate of re-reading in the avid group may indicate that the pleasure these children gain from books is not only the satisfaction of finding out what happens next in the story. Their comments in the interviews showed that they do not re-read because they have already read all suitable or available titles, but because they know what they individually want out of a book, and once that is found will go back to a title or author or series again and again. There were frequent complaints that a favourite author had not written 'more of the same'. The re-reading rates also echo the finding (Ingham 1981a) that avid readers prefer to buy their books in order to read them again. This point was explored further in the Secondary Questionnaires and the Book Forms.

Only seven of the 133 books the avid group read had been discarded unfinished, as against 38 of the 256 books read by the others. This (significant at 1%) contrasts with the finding (Fenwick 1975) that there were no significant differences between the rejection rates of 191 ten to eleven year olds, borrowing over a period of six weeks from school libraries, when their scores were differentiated in terms of the mean number of books selected.

TABLE 3.3 Book rejection amongst avid and non-avid readers

	Avid readers (N=12)	Others	<u>Total</u>
Books unfinished	7	38	45
Books finished	126	218	344
<u>Total</u>	133	256	389
Chi squared = 6.94 (Corrected)      p<.01      df = 1			

With such small numbers it was not possible to investigate the extent to which the differences between the four schools regarding provision and usage of their libraries (e.g. whether books were allowed to be taken home or not) related to borrowings. Seven children did not fill in the columns relating to where their 28 books had come from, leaving 41% of the known origins as "school or class library". A surprisingly high number (39%) of the books listed belonged to the children themselves, a finding which contrasts with the figures from the Secondary Questionnaires, and which supports the idea that some of the books were listed more because they were owned and had been read in the past than because they had been read in the specified four weeks.

Question 10: The best book you have ever read and

Question 13: Do you have a favourite author?

The list of 'best books', interesting for its variety, is appended. Enid Blyton was by far the most popular author, as Ingham (1981a and 1982) also records amongst 10-12 year olds in Bradford. Although Blyton was given in answer to Q.13 forty times, her books, despite the large number of titles published, were only given as 'best books' 8 times, so that many children seemed to remember one specific title by another author with pleasure, but preferred

Blyton in general. This may be because they knew exactly what to expect from her books (other authors may disconcertingly write several different kinds of books) or even because they could not remember the name of the 'best book' writer, but knew Enid Blyton as a popular children's author.

Question 11: Do you always finish every book you begin to read? and

Question 12: Has your teacher read aloud from any books this term, to the class?

Q.11 was intended to be a measure of validity and to demonstrate that the children were not merely trying to please the researcher in their answers. On this count it failed, as 24 (14 girls and 10 boys) asserted that they always finished every book. Three boys and three girls even did so when their responses to Question 8 had already indicated a total of ten books which they had not finished reading.

Q.12 was intended to be used to exclude from Q.6 books not read voluntarily by the pupils. Many members of the same class had different memories of books which had been read aloud, and only a handful had listed any of these books under Q.6. The one book read aloud to many of the pupils (The Winter of Enchantment by Victoria Walker), did not seem to have established a particular place in anyone's affections.

Question 14 : Do you make friends easily?

Question 15 : Do you worry about what people think of you?  
and

Question 19 : How do you spend your spare time?

These three questions, taken together, were intended to provide an estimate of introversion/extraversion which might indicate, when correlated with the number of books read, a relationship between personality and reading habit. The 'IE' score, consisting of an answer "No" to Q.14, "Yes" to Q.15 and "on my own" to Q.19 (maximum 3) was calculated for each child.

TABLE 3.4 : Pupils' introversion/extraversion scores and  
numbers of books read

	0-3	4-15	( <u>books read</u> )
0 - 1	25	39	64
2 - 3	9	7	16
( <u>'IE' score</u> )	34	46	80
			NS

These scores on the two variables were placed in rank order and Spearman's rho (with a correction for the extensive ties) calculated. At .298 ( $t = .262$ ,  $df = 78$ ) it showed a low positive correlation between the 'introversion' scores and the numbers of books listed as having been read in the previous four weeks; like the result of the chi squared test (see Table 3:4) the figures are not significant. Thus the tendency, such as it was, was against the idea expressed in the research literature that "the doers are the readers" or that "a book reader is more likely to be a socially integrated person and that the non-reader tends to

be lonely and isolated" (B. Tuchmon p.8, and J. Hadja p.44, both quoted in Cole and Gold 1979). Gray and Rogers (1956) also discuss the idea that maturity in reading is connected with the level of 'social participation'. The personality test given a year later to the same pupils was intended to explore this area further.

Question 16: Do you own any books yourself?

This question of course measures estimates rather than facts, but the results are of interest.

TABLE 3.5 : Number of pupils owning books

	0	<10	<25	<50	<100	>100	( <u>books owned</u> )
'Avid'							
readers	0	0	2	3	4	3	12
Others	6	10	10	26	7	9	68
<u>Totals</u>	6	10	12	29	11	12	80pupils

When this table is re-cast as 2 x 2, chi squared = 4.45 (corrected),  $p < .05$ . Thus avid readers own, or think they own, more books than other pupils, a finding which is not surprising in view of the wish, reported in research (Ingham 1981) and during the interviews for this study, to possess and to keep re-reading favourite books. The 8 'infrequent' readers, who had not read any books in the previous four weeks, tended to own fewer; the boy in this group who thought he had 'up to 100' books was not classified as infrequent in the Secondary Questionnaires (because then he listed some recent reading) and in both those questionnaires (A and B) he estimated his possessions as 'up to 50' books.

Question 17 : Do you think that you read more books now than a year ago? and

Question 18 : Now give your reasons for your answer to Q.17.

78.75% said "more" and 21.25% "less". The majority thus claimed to read more in their last term at Junior school, when most were eleven, than they had done a year previously. This finding should be set against the reported decline in reading between the ages of 10 and 14 (Whitehead 1977). The open-ended Q.18 produced responses which gave the impression of greater validity than any other part of the questionnaire, and these two items were therefore used unaltered the following year. Common reasons were "I am more interested", "I enjoy books now" and "I read better now". For "less" a significant point made was that "The books I read are longer now." "I've other things to do now" perhaps reflects '... new interests and hobbies, the joining of teams and clubs, the wish to be with friends in the peer group rather than at home with the family" (p.65, Brown 1982).

### SUMMARY

The Primary Questionnaire suffered from certain faults of methodology and design which were rectified when the Secondary Questionnaires A and B were drawn up one year later, and administered to the same group of children. It is nevertheless possible to make certain comparisons between the earlier and later measures on particular questions, and these are given in Chapter 4.

One of the faults was that talking was allowed, and this increased peer influence. At least 4 boys changed their mind about liking reading, presumably under this influence, and this may point towards a tendency found later in the Secondary Questionnaires, namely the emergence of a subgroup of boys determinedly anti-reading, perhaps associating it with girls (see Downing et al 1979) or with earlier failure. The difference in attitude and avidity between boys and girls which is a feature of the rest of this investigation is also present here in the Primary schools.

The practice, endorsed by Whitehead et al (1977), of asking for recall of titles read in the previous four weeks may well have encouraged some children to list books read before that period in order to 'please' the researcher, and the fact that 30% asserted that they always finished every book they read increases one's suspicions. Nevertheless, the significant tendencies for avid readers to re-read their books more often than others, to finish their books more often, and to own more books, are confirmed in the Secondary Questionnaires, and seem valid. The great variety of reading undertaken is also echoed there, and the introversion/extraversion finding, although inconclusive, was thought worth further investigation, in view of the research evidence.

Thus the Primary Questionnaire contained several questions which were kept unchanged the following year, and some which were modified in view of doubts about their validity. It also indicated trends which were subsequently investigated and confirmed; for all these reasons it performed a useful function.

## THE INTERVIEWS

It has already been suggested that verbatim comments from subjects, whether as a result of free-response items in a questionnaire, or tape-recorded from interviews, can be illuminating. By the time the results of the Primary Questionnaire had been analysed, the respondents were in the first year of their Comprehensive school, aged 11+. It was decided to choose two sub-groups to represent both extremes of the reading avidity continuum and to hold an informal tape-recorded conversation, in private, with each pupil. It was not intended that these interviews, as described in Kerlinger (1964), should provide any quantifiable data, but that they should give an impression of the validity of the Primary Questionnaire and direct attention to issues which might emerge as important during the investigation. The value of this "progressive focussing" is discussed in Parlett and Hamilton (1972).

The two sub-groups consisted of ten infrequent readers, defined as those with a nil response to Question 6 in the Primary Questionnaire, which had been answered nine months earlier, and twelve avid readers, all of whom had claimed ten or more titles read in the previous four weeks. The interview schedule was as follows:



1. Do you now read more or less than last year when you were in the Juniors?
2. Do you now read more or fewer magazines, comics and newspapers?
3. Who pays for the magazines etc.?
4. What is the title of the last book you can remember reading?
5. Where did you get it from?
6. Why did you decide to read it?
7. When do you read? (eg at weekends, in term-time, etc.)  
At what time of the day?
8. Where (in which room) do you usually choose to do most of your reading?
9. Does your mother read? What sort of books or magazines?
10. Does your father read? What sort of books or magazines?

The questions were not always asked in the same order or in the same wording, as only general impressions were sought. Recall of authors and titles read recently was in fact poor; books the researcher knew pupils had read were sometimes not mentioned. Nevertheless, the interviews seemed in some ways more sensitive than the questionnaire had been. The children found it very difficult to say why they had chosen a particular book, unless it was because they had read the author before or seen the story on television. With many of them, but particularly those who were not habitual readers, chance events, such as impulse buys and borrowings from neighbours or relatives, seemed to have a disproportionate effect on their reading. A parental gift, clearly not part of a regular pattern, might be the only book read

during the previous month. Two of the infrequent readers in fact had parents who, according to the children, read a good deal.

The amount of comic and magazine reading seemed to be maintained even when book reading had declined, but the titles of periodicals changed often, reflecting a fickle market. Most of the reading was done at night in bed, as previous research has confirmed. Two interviewees were of particular interest, for connected reasons. One of them, a boy with non-reading parents, alleged that he had read The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings, although he had "skipped a couple of pages". These titles appeared to the researcher to be too difficult for him, especially the latter, and it was felt that he was under some pressure to seek approval by mentioning them. He seemed otherwise incapable of finding or evaluating a book he would genuinely enjoy; it appeared that he was in some need of help, or even tuition, in how to choose fiction. The other interviewee, also an infrequent reader according to the questionnaire, had recently read all 13 Willard Price books, was nagged by his mother to stop reading, and only read little at the time of the interview because he knew of nothing comparable to the Price series, which he had exhausted. It was felt that had he had guidance and assistance he might have even been part of the other, 'avid', group.

These general impressions, although sketchy, suggested that book selection could be investigated further. They also contributed to the conclusion, together with the internal evidence already mentioned, that the Primary Questionnaire instruction, "Write down the titles and authors of all the books you can remember reading since half-term," might

lead to invalid data, and this led to the design of the Secondary Questionnaire.

## CHAPTER FOUR : THE SECONDARY QUESTIONNAIRE A

#### CHAPTER FOUR : THE SECONDARY QUESTIONNAIRE A

The Secondary A Questionnaire (Appendix 2) was administered in April 1982 to 85 pupils (42 boys and 43 girls). 38 of those boys and 38 of those girls had answered the Primary questionnaire; four boys had answered the Primary questionnaire but subsequently transferred to different schools. The pupils were at that stage in their first year at a Roman Catholic comprehensive school, aged 11 to 12. They answered under examination conditions, without warning, during an English lesson. The questionnaires were all administered on the same day, and invigilated by the pupils' normal English teacher, after instruction from the researcher.

##### Question 1 : How much do you like reading?

A Likert five-point scale gave rise to these responses.

TABLE 4.1 : Attitude to reading

	Boys	Girls	<u>Total</u>
Dislike very much	4	0	4
Dislike	3	0	3
Not sure	6	7	13
Like	18	11	29
Like very much	11	25	36
<u>Total</u>	42	43	85

Chi squared = 1.79 (re-cast as 2 x 2 with cont. correction)

NS

The tendency for the girls to register a much more positive attitude to reading may well be partly due to a desire to please the researcher, as it is more marked than that reported in other studies. There is, moreover, a small group of boys (n = 7) who are pointedly anti-reading; their dislike may have been induced by early failure, or be part of a general rebellion against school and what it approves of, a symptom of a developing counter-culture (cf Lacey 1970). One of the boys in this group later commented on a Book Form of The Guinness Book of Snooker "It was MAGNIFICENT and BRILLIANT and SUPER" (his capitals). On the Secondary Questionnaire A he had also listed another snooker book which he had read to the end, and claimed to read for pleasure 'once a week' and to possess from 26 to 50 books. Yet he also said he disliked reading 'very much' and volunteered the comment, in the space after the last question, that "I hate reading because it makes my eyes ache."

Question 2 : Do you often read any magazine or comics or newspapers?

It was expected that the discrepancy between the sexes would be less marked in these responses, as comic reading is less clearly sanctioned by school and authority. In fact the difference is still there, as Table 4.2 shows.

TABLE 4.2 : Do you often read any magazines or comics or newspapers?

	<u>Total</u>				
	Boys	Girls		'Avid' gp.	Others
"Yes"	27	42	69	15	54
"No"	15	1	16	0	16
<u>Total</u>	42	43	85	15	70

Chi squared = 13.39 (corrected) Chi squared=2.86 (corrected)  
df = 1                      p<.001                      df = 1

NS

Thus 36% of boys claim not to read periodicals, a significant difference. Whitehead (1977), who omits newspapers from his enquiry, quotes 17% of 10+ boys and 18.8% of 12+ boys as listing no magazines or comics as regularly read; the corresponding figures for girls are 12.1% and 21.6%. Maxwell (1977), in his Scottish study, found little difference between the sexes at these ages, and only about 5% failed to record any newspapers or magazines as read over a 7-day period. The discrepancy may partly arise from the use of the word 'often', but as the overall figure (18.8%) of non-readers is similar to Whitehead's, the striking sex difference probably indicates the same 'anti-reading' set amongst some of the boys which has been hinted at in the Primary Questionnaire and which recurs throughout this study.

The most popular titles listed by these 11+ pupils were similar to those given one year before, though maturation of taste had rendered comics such as Dandy, Beano and Whizzer & Chips less widely read. The newspapers mentioned are, of course, a reflection of adult taste.

Question 3 : Are you a member of a public library?

TABLE 4.3 : Membership of a public library

	<u>Total</u>				
	Boys	Girls		'Avid' gp.	Others
"Yes"	28	33	61	13	48
"No"	14	10	24	2	22
<u>Total</u>	42	43	85	15	70
Chi squared=1.04 (corrected)			Chi squared=1.2 (corrected)		
df = 1			df = 1		
NS			NS		

More have joined than a year before, when 2/3 of the group were members, a trend which contrasts with that reported by Leng (1968) who found 67% members at 10+ and 61% at 11+.

Question 4 : Are you reading a book now?

This question, together with Q.9, "Have you just finished reading a book?", formed the basis of the measure of the amount of voluntary reading undertaken. For reasons given earlier these questions were considered more valid than those asked in the Primary Questionnaire, where children had been asked to provide a list of all books read in the previous four weeks. Then, those who recorded ten titles or more were compared with those who gave none, but it was soon clear from their conversation at the time that some had forgotten titles they had read, and others had included books probably read outside the specified period.



If the response to Q.4 and Q.9 was affirmative, further information had to be given, so that the four questions following were thought to act as some kind of check on pure fabrication. Although "now" and "just finished" are not defined, it was felt that there was unlikely to be a significant variation in the way they were interpreted, and indeed in the administration of the questionnaires no queries were in fact raised about the meaning of these items.

To assist analysis, answers to Q.4 and Q.9 were classified in the following manner. Those who answered 'No' to both questions comprised category 0, those who answered 'Yes' to either one category 1, and those who answered 'Yes' to both, category 2.

TABLE 4.4 : Categories of reader

	Boys	Girls	<u>Total</u>
Category 0	9	1	10
Category 1	23	12	35
Category 2	10	30	40
<u>Total</u>	42	43	85

Chi squared = 19.9

df = 1

p<.001

From those pupils in category 2 a sub-group of exceptionally avid readers (3 boys and 12 girls) was selected on the evidence of the Secondary Questionnaires A and B, the Diaries and, where relevant, the Book Forms. A sub-group of infrequent readers, comprising all those in category 0, was chosen in the same way.

TABLE 4.5 : Are you reading a book now? and Have you just finished reading a book? (Q.4 and Q.9)

Q.4	Boys	Girls	<u>Q.4 Total</u>	Q.9	Boys	Girls	<u>Q.9 Total</u>
"Yes"	21	41	62		22	31	53
"No"	21	2	23		20	12	32
<u>Total</u>	42	43	85		42	43	85

Chi squared = 19.9 (corrected) Chi squared = 2.73 (corrected)

p < .001                      df = 1                      df = 1                      NS

This table shows that at least ten girls who answered 'Yes' to Q.4 answered 'No' to Q.9. It may be that some girls, wishing to please, interpreted 'now' and 'just finished' more fluidly than the boys, and therefore rather than answer negatively listed under Q.4 titles which properly belonged to the later question (to which they then had to answer 'No').

The following table includes only those who gave 'mixed' answers in order to show this more clearly. The Fisher exact probability test is used because the smallest expected frequency in this 2 x 2 contingency falls below 5. (Siegel 1956 page 110).

TABLE 4.6 : Analysis of Category 1 answers

Q.4	Q.9	Boys	Girls	<u>Totals</u>
"Yes"	"No"	11	11	22
"No"	"Yes"	12	1	13
<u>Total</u>		23	12	35

Fisher exact probability test : p = 0.011

What is not known, however, is whether one should expect

subjects in general to be as likely (as the boys are in Table 4.6) to claim that they are currently reading a book as to claim that they have just finished one. Without this knowledge, interpretation is difficult; it may even be the boys' results which are the more significant.

Question 5: Do you think you will read it to the end?

This question was introduced to balance its counterpart later, Q.10 "Did you read it to the end?", although it is not of course directly comparable. If it is assumed, however, that such forecasts are fairly accurate, the results for this question can be combined with those for Q.10 to produce the following table.

TABLE 4.7 : Numbers of books finished by avid readers and

	<u>others</u>		
	'Avid' group	Others	<u>Total</u>
Books finished or			
to be finished	30	69	99
Books left unfinished	0	16	16
<u>Total</u>	30	85	115 books
Chi squared = 5.08 (corrected)		df = 1	p<.05

Here the finding of the Primary Questionnaire, that avid readers are more likely to finish the books they read than others, is confirmed. The analysis below of avid readers' strategies for choosing books discusses whether their books are less often unfinished because they know how to select what they will enjoy reading. The assumption here is that an abandoned or 'rejected' book (Fenwick 1975) is the result of a faulty choice; it could be argued, however, that this is not true of non-fiction.

Question 6 : Have you ever read it before?

The results can again be combined with those for the corresponding Q.11.

TABLE 4.8 : Numbers of books re-read : avid readers and others

	Avid group	Others	<u>Total</u>
Books which had			
been read before	10	8	18
Books not read before	20	77	97
<u>Total</u>	30	85	115 books
Chi squared = 7.88 (corrected)		p<.01	

The higher re-reading rate amongst the 'avid' group, as in the Primary Questionnaire, might be attributed to the fact that such children would rather read again a book they have found enjoyable, than begin a title they suspect they will not like.

Question 7 and Question 12 : Why did you choose it?

This open-ended question was asked with reference both to the book being currently read and the book 'just finished'. It was also asked on the Book Form, which a subgroup of half the pupils filled in whenever they borrowed a book for private reading from school. On the Book Form, however, eleven categories of answer were listed, one or more of which were to be ticked, together with one 'write-in' open category.

The answers given in the Secondary Questionnaires were very different. They were given retrospectively, rather than at the moment of choice, so that often they referred to why the book had, on reading, been found interesting, rather than

why it had been chosen in the first place. Probably "It was exciting and it was funny" is an example of this. Some did not answer the question, as "I didn't. I was given it." and "I did not. My mum did. I got it for Christmas" (a book on horror movies, which was still current, unfinished reading the following April).

As far as possible, the answers were coded using the same eleven Book Form categories, a) to l), the last being the open 'write-in' class. As many as 26 answers out of 112 had to be put in this last group, largely because the respondent clearly did not know exactly why the book had been chosen, a phenomenon which caused no surprise as it had also been noticed in the interviews. "It looked exciting and enjoyable" and "It looked interesting" are responses of this type, where the reader does not know, or no longer remembers, exactly what about the book gave this impression.

The other well-used category, with 29 answers, was h) 'I am interested in what the book is about'. On the Book Form, this reason was ticked to explain why a particular non-fiction book had been chosen. When classifying the open-ended responses of the Questionnaire, however, answers like "Because I like ghostly stories" and "It had History involved in it" and "I like books about school stories" had to be coded h) as well, for there was no category referring to genre. References to reading a review similarly had to be coded k) 'Someone told me it was good'. Moreover "I read the back and liked it" (a reference to the 'blurb') was coded g) 'I read a page or so and liked it' although one might argue that these two strategies, both highly useful, provide the inquirer with very different kinds of information about a book.

TABLE 4.9 : Reasons for book choice

Category	Boys	Girls	<u>Total</u>		Avids	Others	Book Forms
a)	0	5	5		2	3	22
b)	7	6	13		6	7	17
c)	1	5	6		3	3	12
d)	2	3	5		2	3	13
e)	0	0	0		0	0	5
f)	0	0	0		0	0	2
g)	2	5	7		3	4	13
h)	12	17	29		6	23	16
i)	2	5	7		2	5	3
j)	2	3	5		3	2	5
k)	4	6	10		4	6	9
l)	10	16	26		1	25	6
<u>Total</u>	42	71	113		32	81	123
			(115 books)				
					(56 books)		

Some reasons were not given, while other answers gave two or three categories of reason for a book. The extreme right hand column gives the numbers of times different reasons were chosen by those who filled in the Book Forms, but detailed comparisons are not possible because the Book Form reasons were selected from a limited choice, and are not the result of analysis of an open-ended question. These figures are also given in Table 6.3 below, which also explains the different categories.

In the course of the report in Chapter Six on the Book Form experiment in general, evidence is presented that books chosen for 'good' reasons are more likely to be finished, and enjoyed, than books chosen for 'poor' reasons. The 'poor' reasons are categories c, d, e and f, referring to the cover, title, size of print and pictures in a book, because they suggest a comparatively superficial examination. One might expect avid readers to be better at choosing books than non-avid readers, and therefore to give 'poor' reasons less often; in fact the figures show that the null hypothesis must be accepted.

TABLE 4.10: Avid readers' reasons for book choice

	'Avid' group	Others	<u>Total</u> (multiple reasons extracted)
'Poor' reasons	2	6	8
'Good' reasons	27	75	102
<u>Total</u>	29	81	110 books
Chi squared = 0.11 (corrected)      df = 1      NS			

If, then, avid readers finish more books (Table 4:7 and Table 3:3) but choose no better, their finishing may be related to their avidity only, and perhaps connected with their willingness to re-read rather than to read nothing. In the Secondary Questionnaire B avid readers were not significantly more likely to finish their books, nor to choose well: they were, however, once more likely to re-read.

Question 8 and Question 13 : Where did you get it from?

Most of the books listed had either been borrowed from the school library or from a teacher's class library, or had been obtained, usually as gifts, from friends or relatives.

TABLE 4.11 : Origins of books read

	'Avid' group	Others	<u>Total</u>
From the school	20	44	64
Elsewhere	10	41	51
<u>Total</u>	30	85	115 books
Chi squared = 1.44 (corrected)			df = 1      NS

Thus 56% of books had been obtained from school, and largely from the main school library. There is a contrast here with the figures from the Primary Questionnaire, where 41% of known origins were 'school or class library' and Table 4.12 shows that the children were significantly less likely to obtain their reading matter from school the previous year, when they were in the Primary schools, than in the Comprehensive.

TABLE 4.12 : Origins of books read: comparison of

Primary and Secondary schools

	Primary Q'aire	Secondary A	<u>Total</u>
From the school	148	64	212
Elsewhere	213	51	264
<u>Total</u>	361	115	476 books

Chi squared = 7.00 (corrected)      df = 1

p<.01



The comparison is based, of course, on two slightly different ways of obtaining information on recent reading. However, most of the children answered the Primary Questionnaire surrounded by the shelves of their class libraries, whereas the Secondary Questionnaires were answered under examination conditions, and this fact perhaps counteracted the possible tendency of the younger children to list books they owned at home but had not read in the previous four weeks.

It is of interest that many of those who wrote in response to Questions 17 and 18 that they read more than they had done the previous year in the Primary school, gave as their reason the wider choice offered by the Secondary School library. The avid readers in particular tend to rely heavily on the school library, but the difference is not statistically significant. Whitehead (1977) gives only 21% of books listed as having been obtained from school or class libraries at 12+, and 36% at 10+, an indication perhaps that in this study the school libraries were better or more encouraging or that outside facilities were worse.

Question 14 : About how often do you read for pleasure during the week?

In their replies the children had to tick one of four boxes; one girl who was quite unable to decide between 'Every day' and 'Several times a week' has been allocated to the latter category.

TABLE 4.13 : Pupils' estimates of their own reading

	<u>frequency</u>				
	<u>Total</u>				
	Boys	Girls		Avid group	Others
Every day	14	15	29	8	21
Several times					
a week	14	22	36	5	31
Once a week	) 4	5	( 9 )	( 2	7
Not very often	) 10	1	(11 )	( 0	11
<u>Total</u>	42	43	85	15	70
If data are recast into 3 rows			If recast, chi squared		
chi squared = 5.0			= 3.12		
df = 2			df = 2		
NS			NS		

The girls claim to read more frequently than the boys, but although twelve of the fifteen members of the 'avid' group are girls, the tendency of that group to also read more often is not significant. Doubt is thrown on these estimates because so many of the expected cell frequencies are near to 5, and because one of the 'infrequent' readers claimed to read 'Every day' and two to read 'Several times a week'. The following table sought to eliminate the effect of sex by excluding girls. As  $n < 20$ , chi squared cannot be used; the rows have therefore been conflated to form a 2 x 2 contingency table so that the Fisher test is applicable.

TABLE 4.14 : Boys' estimates of their reading frequency

	Category 0	Category 2	<u>Total</u>
Every day )	4	9	13
Several times a week )			
Once a week )	5	1	6
Not very often )			
<u>Total</u>	9	10	19 boys

Fisher exact probability :  $p = 0.049$

Here the 'categories' are associated with reading frequency in the direction one would expect: those who apparently read more according to Q.4 and Q.9 tend to read more according to Q.14. The trend is not quite as marked in the opposite direction, as noted above. It is not clear why there is an avoidance of 'Once a week', particularly amongst the boys; perhaps the phrase suggests too much regularity but insufficient frequency.

Question 15: Have you ever bought anything from the school bookshop?

At this time the primary schools these children had previously attended did not run bookshops. From September until April, when the Secondary Questionnaire A was completed, they had been able to buy and order paperbacks, both fiction and non-fiction, every Monday lunch-time from a display set up in a corner of the Dining Hall by a member of staff. Table 4.15 shows that the boys, despite being on the whole less avid readers, had made slightly more use of this facility than the girls did. The avid group in general bought books more than the others, not unexpectedly, but the figures are not quite significant.

TABLE 4.15 : Pupils who have bought from the school bookshop

			<u>Total</u>		
	Boys	Girls		Avid gp.	Others
"Yes"	8	5	13	5	8
"No"	34	38	72	10	62
<u>Total</u>	42	43	85	15	70

Chi squared = 0.42 (corrected) NS      Chi squared = 3.04  
(corrected) NS

Question 16: Do you own any books yourself? (Books that belong to you)

TABLE 4.16: Numbers of books owned by pupils

			<u>Total</u>		
	Boys	Girls		Avid gp.	Others
No books	4	1	5	0	5
1 - 10	11	5	16	1	15
11 - 25	8	9	17	2	15
26 - 50	9	10	19	2	17
51 - 100	8	11	19	5	14
100+	2	7	9	5	4
<u>Total</u>	42	43	85	15	70

Differences between boys and girls, re-cast so that the first row read 'None to ten books', were not significant (chi squared = 7.00). When the figures on the right-hand side of the above table, for the avid group and the others, were arranged as a 2 x 2 contingency table, it was clear that there was a tendency for the avid readers to own more than fifty books, and for the others to own less than fifty

books. (Chi squared = 11.3,  $p < .001$ ). This is not unexpected but the data confirm the validity of the avid group. The contingency coefficient, despite its limitations (see Siegel 1956 page 201), and although it is not comparable with other measures of correlation, or even with itself when derived from a table of a different size, can be computed from chi squared. Here  $C = .34$ , or  $.48$  when the correction for grouping is applied.

Question 17: Do you think that you read more books now than you used to a year ago?

In response to this question one year previously, 78.75% replied 'More' and 21.25% 'Less'. In the Secondary A Questionnaire the figures were 70.23% and 29.76% respectively:

More = 59

Less = 25

Same = 1

Total = 85

The trend, as explained in the review of the literature, is for fewer books to be read during the years from ten to fourteen, so that the data may be seen as evidence of the success, at least to some extent, of the secondary school's policy of encouraging voluntary reading. Seven of the children who had previously replied 'Less' changed their minds, and fourteen who had said the year before that they read more, said they read less in the secondary school. This change is insignificant by the McNemar test, which in any case is not really applicable to the data as the period of time referred to by the question is different in each case.

Question 18: Now give your reasons for your answer to  
Question 17

Nine children gave unclassifiable reasons (e.g. "Because I read more magazines"); the remainder are shown in Table 3.17.

TABLE 4.17: Reasons for reading more or less than a year

	<u>previously</u>	
Reasons for reading more now (i.e. at end of first year at secondary school):	Boys	Girls
a) I enjoy it more, it's more interesting, like it better	7	7
b) Better choice/range of books in school library	4	9
c) I have more time	2	1
d) School policy	5	3
e) Books are better now/used not to be able to find good ones	5	3
f) I am better/faster at reading	1	3
g) Miscellaneous	2	2
Reasons for reading less now		
h) I have too much homework now	4	8
i) I have less time, more to do	3	1
j) I prefer doing other things/don't like books as much	4	0
k) School policy	1	0
l) The books aren't interesting/I can't find books I like	0	1
<u>Total</u>	38	38

Category d) 'School policy', comprises references to the facts that in the Junior schools most pupils were not allowed to take books home, that each Secondary class was taken to the library for one lesson a week, that there were classroom libraries in the English rooms, that the form period (pastoral) was often used for private reading, and answers like "Because we had to in English so I just started to enjoy reading". Category k) 'School policy', was used for "In our Junior (school) you used to have to get a book and read it every morning to the teacher", from a pupil who had had difficulty in learning to read and disliked all that it represented. He seems to be referring to the practice of being 'heard read' daily from a reader, which most of his classmates no longer had to do. Category e) may relate to the fact that a large school library may be better able to cater for varied tastes (b), but the answers seemed to suggest that the books available for older children were intrinsically more interesting, though there is also an implication that book-finding strategies improve with age. One might infer from category f) that as reading speed and skill increase, tackling the kind of full-length book that children at this stage want to read becomes less of an ordeal and there is less chance that details of the plot may be forgotten before the end is reached, a circumstance which greatly reduces the reader's interest and motivation. Finally, category g), 'Miscellaneous', includes "Because I am older", "I get more books for Christmas", "I used to play out more" and "It makes you good at spelling".

Almost half of the reasons for reading more ( $b + d = 21$ ) are directly subject to the influences of school provision and policy, while (e) may also be related. It can be suggested, therefore, that the school can and should play a prominent part in encouraging children to read more rather than less from year to year.

Question 19: How much do your parents read?

Children rated the extent of parental reading on a four-point scale from 'A great deal' to 'Hardly at all', treating mothers and fathers separately. Twelve from single parent families did not feel able to estimate the amount of reading for the deceased or absent parent, and therefore rated one parent only; for 11 of these this was the mother. Table 3.18 shows that there was no significant tendency for girls rather than boys to rate mothers as reading extensively; nor was there any association between avidly reading children and 'avid' mothers as perceived by those children.

TABLE 4.18 : Mothers' reading as perceived by their children

	<u>Total</u>			
	Boys	Girls		Avid Others
A great deal	12	11	23	6 17
Quite a lot	12	19	31	4 27
Not very much	8	7	15	3 12
Hardly at all	10	5	15	1 14
<u>Total</u>	42	42	84	14 70
Chi squared = 3.12			Chi squared = 3.30	
df = 3		NS	(3rd & 4th rows	
			combined) df = 2	
				NS



The one female avid reader who only rated her father has been omitted.

TABLE 4.19: Fathers' reading as perceived by their children

	<u>Total</u>				
	Boys	Girls	Avid	Others	
A great deal	9	8	17	4	13
Quite a lot	11	17	28	6	22
Not very much	7	8	15	3	12
Hardly at all	8	6	14	2	12
<u>Total</u>	35	39	74	15	59
Chi squared = 1.4 NS			Chi squared = 0.3		
df = 3			(3rd & 4th rows		
			combined) df = 2		
					NS

The eleven pupils who did not rate their fathers have been omitted. Once more, the null hypothesis is upheld; there is no association between fathers' reading and the sex or reading avidity of their children.

There is, however, a significant association between sex and the answers to the following, which appeared as a supplementary after Question 19: "If you know any other grown-ups who read a lot, write them down here". Only 28 pupils wrote anything, as Table 4.20 shows, but twenty of those were girls.

TABLE 4.20 Knowledge of other reading adults

			<u>Total</u>		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Avid	Others
Other reading adults	8	20	28	7	21
named					
No other reading	34	23	57	8	49
adults named					
<u>Total</u>	42	43	85	15	70
Chi squared = 6.06	p<0.02		Chi squared = 0.89 NS		
(corrected)	df = 1		(corrected) df = 1		

The adults who were named were usually relatives, especially grand-parents, and sometimes neighbours. Tables 4:18 to 4:20 indicate that there is no relationship between these children's reading avidity and that of their parents, as they perceive it, or that of other adults on whom they might have been thought to model their behaviour. Nevertheless, there is an interesting sex difference, which may once again be attributable to a stronger desire to comply with what they see as the researcher's wishes on the part of the girls.

Question 20: Now complete these sentences as truthfully as you can.

These were taken from the Assessment of Performance Unit's statements for completion (Gorman 1981 et al) with the intention of comparing the results, and the attitudes to reading revealed, with those from a nation-wide sample. In the latter case, however, the respondents were eleven year olds in their last year at their primary schools, and thus one year younger than the pupils under discussion.

The first sentence for completion was "The thing I like

best about reading is...". Gorman et al divided the responses to this into six broad categories, and Table 4.21 shows that the percentages reported for each are similar to those obtained in the present study. Although Gorman et al give detailed examples for each category, it is of course unlikely that the classification match is perfect; nevertheless, it seemed worthwhile to establish points of comparison.

TABLE 4.21 Responses to "The thing I like best about  
reading is..."

	<u>Total(%)</u>			Gorman		
	Boys	Girls		Avid	Others	et al (1981)
a) Responses implying enjoyment through a conventional adject- ive or construction	11	12	23 (33.8%)	5	18	27.5%
b) Responses which explain source of enjoyment.	6	11	17 (25%)	2	15	18.7%
c) Responses refer- ring to self-impro- vement (more knowledge).	6	5	11 (16.2%)	3	8	14.2%
d) Responses referring to self-improvement (helping school work).	2	0	2 (2.9%)	0	2	14.6%
e) Responses referring to usefulness after school.	1	0	1 (1.5%)	0	1	1.2%
f) Responses refer- ring to indepen- dence/freedom of choice	1	4	5 (7.4%)	1	4	11.2%
g) Responses referring to filling in time	4	5	9 (13.2%)	3	6	12.3%
h) No reply.	2	4	6 (-)	1	5	-
i) Irrelevant reply (e.g. "Looking at the pictures")	9	2	11 (-)	0	11	-
<u>TOTAL</u>	42	43	85	15	70	

The striking disparities between the figures reported here and those of the APU study are in categories d) and f). It is not clear why the pupils in the sample under investigation should be so much less likely to think of voluntary reading as helping school-work, English, vocabulary, spelling, writing, reading itself or generally helping to improve the imagination. Nor is it clear why fewer pupils saw the best thing about reading as being the independence and freedom of choice it confers. In other respects, however, the spread of answers over the different categories bearing in mind the classification difficulties, is very similar for both samples.

The next sentence for completion was "The place I like to be when I am reading is ...". Here there were some multiple answers, but no statements left blank, an indication that the children found this sentence easier to complete, perhaps as much because of its simpler grammatical construction as because the answer came immediately to mind. Table 4.22 gives the results.

TABLE 4.22 Responses to "The place I like to be when I am  
reading is..."

Responses			<u>Total</u> (%)	Avid	Others	Gorman
	Boys	Girls				
General (peace & quiet)	5	2	7 (7.4%)	1	6	17.3%
Home (excluding bedroom)	10	7	17 (17.9%)	3	14	16.9%
Bedroom	23	34	57 (60%)	12	45	62.6%
Outdoors/school/library	5	9	11 (11.6%)	1	10	15.8%
<u>Total</u>	42	52	95	17	78	

The distribution is still comparable to that obtained by Gorman et al, although there are fewer in the 'General' category. Many of those who answered 'Home' or 'Bedroom' referred to the qualities of peace and quiet to be found there; some also mentioned being alone and undisturbed, and a few mentioned warmth.

TABLE 4.23 Responses to "I wish that books ..."

Responses	Total(%)					
	Boys	Girls		Avid	Others	Gorman
More exciting	11	12	23 (28%)	8	15	42.2%
Specific subject/ plot	4	3	7 (8.5%)	1	6	11.0%
More humorous	1	2	3 (3.7%)	1	2	9.3%
Cheaper	7	11	18 (22%)	4	14	13.9%
Easier/more difficult	2	0	2 (2.4%)	0	2	2.4%
More pictures/ shorter	20	15	35 (42.7%)	6	29	29%
No reply	1	2	3 (-)	0	3	-

This stem also produced some multiple answers, which is why the percentages add up to more than 100. The second category included some requests for more realistic books, as "were not about soppy girls with soppy horses because it is very unrealistic" and "had more true details in". It is unclear why cost should have been of greater concern in 1982 than in 1979, though unemployment in the area had certainly risen. The sixth category, following Gorman, covered wishes for greater length as well as brevity, and general comments on format: "I wish that series of books went on for ever especially the Susan Cooper series", and "I wish that books were smaller in size so they could fit in my pockets".

The last of the four stems stated, "I dislike books that ...". Responses included dislike of books that were "expensive", "always had a happy ending", "had difficult words", "criticised other books", "were hardbacks", "don't put enough about the story on the back", that "I have to

read and that I don't understand", were "sad and scary", were "exciting at the beginning and then boring at the end", were "short but expensive", didn't have "very good endings", were "extremely complicated", had "jokes all the way through like the 'Beano'", were "very fictitious", were "short stories" and were "horrific".

TABLE 4.24 Responses to "I dislike books that..."

Responses	<u>Total(%)</u>					
	Boys	Girls		Avid	Others	Gorman%
Boring	11	7	18 (25.7%)	0	18	28.9%
Specific subject/ plot	2	6	8 (11.4%)	2	6	48.4%
No pictures	7	3	10 (14.3%)	0	10	6.8%
Small print	2	4	7 (10%)	0	7	1.1%
Large print	1	1	2 (2.9%)	0	2	0.7%
Too long	11	5	16 (22.9%)	3	13	5.3%
A long introduction	3	6	9 (12.9%)	4	5	<6.3%

The last category presumably refers to the barrier that 'getting into' a book, understanding something of the characters and situation without having to read long static paragraphs of description, often presents to the inexperienced reader. It is the absence of this hiatus in enjoyment that makes the series, where the relationship of Julian to George to Timmy the dog need not be explained before any action begins, so popular. The complaint about the 'blurb' on the back raises the point much stressed in the interpretation of the findings of this study: that of the children's difficulties in effecting a successful choice of what they want to read.



## SUMMARY

Findings from the Secondary A Questionnaire can be divided into two groups: those concerned with differences between the sexes and those concerned with differences between avid readers and others.

In the first group it appeared that significantly more girls than boys claim to read magazines, comics and newspapers. More girls in this sample are, in the terms of the questionnaire, Category 2 or 3 readers, whereas more boys are Category 1. Nearly all the girls claim to be reading a book now, but there is no significant discrepancy between the sexes in the replies to "Have you just finished reading a book?" It has already been suggested that this is because girls are more compliant and wish to please the questioner; they may also see reading as an activity more appropriate to their sex than boys do, but be unable to think of another book for the later question; they may read more slowly and thus be more likely to be reading at any one moment than boys; they may read longer books - for both these reasons they would be less likely to have 'just' finished a book. The balance between fiction and non-fiction may be relevant in that fiction is usually read to the end but non-fiction may be finished with after partial reading only. Girls are also significantly more likely than boys to name reading adults other than their parents when asked to: this may be another sign of greater compliance, or point to their reading habits as being more subject to the influence of others than boys' are.

The results for the avid group confirmed those already

obtained in the Primary Questionnaire. Avid readers are significantly more likely to finish and less likely to reject their books than non-avid readers (all others). Their tendency to choose better however is not significant. Avid readers re-read their books more; re-reading involves less effort than broaching a new volume, and is more relaxing - it suggests an enjoyment in which more is involved than just finding the answer to the question 'What happens next?'. Not surprisingly, avid readers tend to own more than 50 books, whereas the others tend to own less than 50. Further light is shed on these results by findings of the Secondary B Questionnaire.

CHAPTER FIVE : THE SECONDARY QUESTIONNAIRE B

## CHAPTER FIVE : THE SECONDARY QUESTIONNAIRE B

The Secondary B questionnaire, a reprise of, and identical to, Secondary Questionnaire A, was administered in May 1982 to 81 pupils (40 boys and 41 girls). Two boys and two girls had answered A in April but not B; one because he had left the school and the others through illness on the day the questionnaire was given. Its primary function was to act as a post-test in the Book Form experiment (see Chapter 6), so that it could be ascertained whether the children invited to fill in Book Forms about their borrowing choices had read more or less during the experimental period than their controls. The absentees were therefore not followed up: half term intervened before their return to school and their responses would not have been comparable with those of the others, who had been questioned after a period of exactly six weeks. All data given here, therefore, excludes these four pupils.

The children were aged 11 to 12, in the first year at a Roman Catholic comprehensive school, and answered under examination conditions with one change in administration details which is discussed under Question 5. Where their replies are significantly different from those they gave in the Secondary A questionnaire, this is made clear: as the time interval was so short, it would be surprising if there were much difference, and to some extent test-retest reliability, and a high degree of correlation, is reassuring.

### Question 1: How much do you like reading?

A Likert five-point scale gave rise to these responses.

TABLE 5.1 Attitude to reading

	Boys	Girls	<u>Total</u>
Dislike very much	4	0	4
Dislike	1	1	2
Not sure	9	4	13
Like	19	13	32
Like very much	7	23	30
<u>Total</u>	40	41	81

Chi squared = 13.9 (re-cast as 3x2 table)  $p < .001$  df = 4

In the Secondary Questionnaire A the equivalent figures (table 3:1) are not significant, but the same tendency for the girls to have more positive attitudes is there. This difference between the sexes is maintained through many of the other questions, as reported in the summary of Chapter 4.

Question 2: Do you often read any magazines or comics or newspapers?

The following table shows results almost identical to those obtained from the A questionnaire.

TABLE 5.2 Do you often read any magazines  
or comics or newspapers?

	Boys	Girls	<u>Total</u>	'Avid' group	Others
"Yes"	26	40	66	15	51
"No"	14	1	15	0	15
<u>Total</u>	40	41	81	15	66

Chi squared = 14.21 (corrected) Chi squared = 2.81 (corrected)

$p < .001$  df = 1

df = 1

NS

Once again the girls are significantly more likely than the boys to claim that they often read such periodicals, but for avid readers the trend, although strong, is not statistically significant when the continuity correction is used. The consistency between the two questionnaires indicates that these findings are valid for the population investigated, although other researchers (eg Maxwell 1977, Whitehead 1977) have tended to find either lower percentages for non-readers of ephemera or less difference between the sexes. It may be that the small ( $n = 7$ ) group of boys who, as has already been mentioned, are not only infrequent readers but are actively anti-reading in any shape or form, is again responsible in part for these results.

Question 3: Are you a member of a public library?

TABLE 5.3 Membership of a public library

			<u>Total</u>		
	Boys	Girls		'Avid'	Others
"Yes"	25	33	58	14	44
"No"	15	8	23	1	22
<u>Total</u>	40	41	81	15	66

Chi squared = 3.22 (corrected) Chi squared = 3.06 (corrected)

NS              df = 1                              NS              df = 1

One boy, who had claimed that he was a member in April and that he was not in May, seemed on questioning not to be sure either way; he had not in any case visited a public library for a long time. Apart from one avid reader who joined the library in the intervening six weeks, the correlation between Questionnaire 'A' and 'B' is perfect. Again the percentage of library members is, at 72%, slightly higher than that reported by other studies.

Question 4: Are you reading a book now?

As explained in Chapter 4 answers to this question were taken in conjunction with those to Question 9, "Have you just finished reading a book?". Thus the three 'categories' refer to those who answered 'No' to both questions, 'Yes' to one of the two, or 'Yes' to both.

TABLE 5.4 Categories of reader

	Boys	Girls	<u>Total</u>
Category 0 :	12	1	13
Category 1 :	18	14	32
Category 2 :	10	26	36
<u>Total</u> :	40	41	81

Chi squared = 16.9      p<.001    df = 2

As all the 'avid' readers were Category 2 by definition, figures for them are not given. The girls are once more significantly less likely to be in Category 0 and significantly more likely to be in Category 2. Although there are slight changes from the Secondary Questionnaire A, these are insignificant (McNemar test). The McNemar test (Siegel 1956 page 63) measures the significance of changes in related samples (e.g. before and after, as here); it is a counterpart to the Fisher exact test and the chi squared test for independent samples.

The frequencies for the two questions on which the categories are based are given in Table 5.5.

TABLE 5.5 Q4 "Are you reading a book now?" and Q9 "Have you just finished reading a book?"

	Question 4			Question 9		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
"Yes"	20	39	59	18	29	47
"No"	20	2	22	22	12	34
<u>Total</u>	40	41	81	40	41	81
Chi squared = 18.6 (corrected)    Chi squared = 4.5 (corrected)						
p<.001                      df = 1                      p<.05                      df = 1						

Again the sex difference is significant (in the 'A' questionnaire the data for Question 9 did not quite reach that level) and again it seems fair to interpret them by saying that girls who have only one book title to record may, in a desire to please, list it in answer to Question 4 and then find themselves unable to reply positively to Question 9.

Question 5 and Question 10 : Do you think you will read it to the end? and Did you read it to the end?

Since one of these questions asks for a forecast, and the other refers to a historical fact, the analysis of them together is open to objection. It was felt however that if the relationship between them remained constant, the figures could be summed; in the event, the forecast (Q5) of books which would be unfinished was for both questionnaires ('A' and 'B') between 25 and 30% of the total number of rejected titles and thus an underestimate by a similar factor. Of the 115 books listed in 'A' 16, or 13.9%, had been or were expected to be unfinished; of the 104 books listed in 'B' 10, or 9.6%, fell into this category. There were no significant differences in rejection rates between the sexes, and in contrast to the findings of the Primary Questionnaire, and the Secondary Questionnaire 'A', the tendency for the



avid group to finish their books more than the others was not significant either. The reason for the increase in book finishing may be related to the fact that the 'B' questionnaire was administered not as part of a normal English lesson (as 'A' was) but during a week of school examinations, during which library lessons, with their opportunities for the exchange of books, had ceased and the pupils' minds were more concerned with revision than with leisure reading. One might assume that in this situation children were more inclined in the brief intervals between exams and at home to re-read old favourites than to broach new titles. If this were so, more books might be listed as finished in 'B' simply because they had been read previously. This interpretation is borne out by the answers to the next questions.

TABLE 5.6 Numbers of books finished by  
avid readers and others

	Avid readers	Others	Total	
Books finished or expected to be	28	66	94	
Books unfinished or expected to be	2	8	10	
<u>Total</u>	30	74	104	NS

Question 6 and Question 11: Have you ever read it before?

The percentage of books which had been read before, out of the total number of books listed, rose from 15.7% in 'A' to 27.9% in 'B'. This substantial increase probably relates to the aforementioned change in conditions of administration. As with the Primary Questionnaire and Secondary 'A', the avid readers were found to be significantly more likely to have read their books before.

TABLE 5.7 Numbers of books re-read: avid readers and others

	Avid group	Others	<u>Total</u>
Books which had been			
read before:	14	15	29
Books not read before:	16	59	75
<u>Total</u>	30	74	104

Chi squared = 6.14 (corrected)    df = 1    p<.02

Again there was no difference on this measure between the boys and the girls. One can speculate on the reasons for this consistent finding, and it is of particular interest in this connection that of the 36 pupils who listed a title both under Question 4 and under Question 9, 27 of them had either read both books before, or read neither before, whereas only 9 of them had responded in different ways in relation to the two books concerned. Assuming an equal likelihood, and particularly in view of what has been said above about the increase in re-reading at exam time, this suggests perhaps that all pupils, and not merely avid readers, tend either to 'go in for' reading their books several times, or not to. Table 5.8 illustrates this. (The sex difference is not significant).

TABLE 5.8 Consistency of replies to Q6 and Q11, by sex.

	Boys	Girls	<u>Total</u>	
Identical replies (either				
both 'Yes' or both 'No')	9	18	27	
Different replies	1	8	9	
<u>Total</u>	10	26	36	NS

Question 7 and Question 12: Why did you choose it?

The reasons for book choice were again coded into twelve categories, comprising the eleven closed and one open-ended categories given on the Book Form. Again the avid readers were slightly more likely to give 'good' reasons for their choice of books (see Chapter 4) but the figures are not significant.

Question 8 and Question 13: Where did you get it from?

The percentage of books borrowed from school was larger, at 60%, than six weeks before, when it had been 56%, and than a year before, when it had been 41% in the Primary schools. There were no significant differences between the avid readers and the others, or between the boys and the girls, in the origins of the books they had read.

Question 14: About how often do you read for pleasure during a week?

The replies to this question are very similar to those given previously, and they are not significant, but are recorded in Table 5:9 for the sake of completeness.

TABLE 5.9 Pupils' estimates of their own reading frequency.

			<u>Total</u>		
	Boys	Girls		Avid	Others
Every day	12	17	29	9	20
Several times					
a week	13	16	29	5	24
Once a week	4	6	10	1	9
Not very often	11	2	13	0	13
<u>Total</u>	40	41	81	15	66 NS

It was expected that there would be some degree of correlation between the categories of reader established on the basis of answers to Q4 and Q9, and pupils' estimates of their own reading frequency. Table 5:10 shows the contingency co-efficient to be .37. (Garrett's correction for grouping is not applicable here, as the column and row numbers are not equal: a rough approximation, however, would be  $C = .48$ .)

TABLE 5.10 Correlation between reader 'categories' and reading frequency

	Categories: 0 1 2			<u>Total</u>
Every day/several times a week	5	21	32	58
Once a week/not very often	8	11	4	23
<u>Total</u>	13	32	36	81
Chi squared = 12.88    df = 2 $p < .01$ $C = 0.37$				

Question 15: Have you ever bought anything from the school bookshop?

Two more girls, both of them in the 'avid' group, had bought a book in school since the question was asked before, and this was sufficient to make the data significant at  $p < .01$ , which they had not been previously.

TABLE 5.11 Pupils who have bought from the school bookshop

	Boys	Girls	<u>Total</u>	Avid group	Others
"Yes"	8	7	15	7	8
"No"	32	34	66	8	58
<u>Total</u>	40	41	81	15	66
NS			Chi squared = 7.5    df = 1		
			p<.001 (corrected)		

Thus the avid group are more likely to buy books than the others.

Question 16: Do you own any books yourself? (Books that belong to you)

In the Secondary 'A' questionnaire, although more girls claimed to own larger numbers of books than boys, the trend did not reach significance. In 'B' however, it did, and in both questionnaires the avid group were significantly more likely to own books than the non-avid group (Shown as Others). Table 5.12 gives the figures in full, while Table 5.13 shows the groupings used for significance tests, numbers in cells being otherwise too small.

TABLE 5.12 Number of books owned by pupils

	Boys	Girls	<u>Total</u>	Avid group	Others
No books	3	2	5	0	5
1 - 10	7	3	10	1	9
11 - 25	8	4	12	1	11
26 - 50	10	10	20	1	19
51 - 100	9	16	25	7	18
>100 books	3	6	9	5	4
<u>Total</u>	40	41	81	15	66

TABLE 5.13 Numbers of books owned by pupils:

<u>conflated groupings</u>							
	Boys	Girls	<u>Total</u>		Avid gp.	Others	Total
0-25 bks	18	9	27	0-50 bks	3	44	47
26-50	10	10	20	51-100	7	18	25
>50	12	22	34	>100	5	4	9
<u>Total</u>	40	41	81		15	66	81
Chi squared = 6.65 df = 2				Chi squared = 14.01 df = 2			
p<.05				p<.001			

When one compares the results of the two questionnaires, a marked tendency can be seen for pupils, and especially boys, to claim to own more books in May than they had thought they possessed in April. With each child acting as his or her own control, the number whose claims differed was 33, distributed as Table 5:14 shows.

TABLE 5.14 Pupils claiming to own more or fewer books in May than in April

	Boys	Girls	<u>Total</u>
Differences between			
'A' and 'B' questionnaires:			
Pupils claiming to own fewer	1	9	10
Pupils claiming to own more	11	12	23
Total discrepant claims	12	21	33
	p = .003 NS		p = .018
			(corrected)

The sign test for small samples was used for the boys and for the girls, treated separately, and the sign test for large samples, with continuity correction, for the totals. As there were barely six weeks between the two questionnaires, it seems unlikely that pupils, especially boys, had in fact acquired so many more books in the interval. If, however, the changes reflect a change in attitude towards books one would expect this attitude shift to be shown also in other parts of the questionnaire. It is also possible that the children had merely become more accurate in recording the real number of books they owned, especially since one pupil volunteered the information later that after answering the April 'A' questionnaire she had counted her books, and found that she owned many more than she thought. As some of the shifts had been major, from, for instance, 25 books to 100 books, this finding may be of interest to researchers who need to establish book ownership with accuracy.

Question 17: Do you think that you read more books now than you used to a year ago?

As the questionnaires were administered with a relatively short interval between them, any differences in the answers to this question could be regarded as revealing differences in attitude rather than in fact. In the event, two members of the 'avid' group changed from 'More' to 'Less' and one non-avid boy moved in the opposite direction, so that the results seem to indicate a reasonable degree of reliability. Table 5.15 gives the 'A' figures in parenthesis.

TABLE 5.15 Pupils claiming to read more or fewer  
books than a year before

			<u>Total</u>		
	Boys	Girls		Avid gp.	Others
Pupils reading more	27(26)	28(30)	55(56)	7(9)	48(47)
Pupils reading less	13(14)	13(11)	26(25)	8(6)	18(19)
<u>Total</u>	40	41	81	15	66

NS

Chi squared = 2.7 (corrected) NS (Sec.B questionnaire)

Chi squared = 3.6 (corrected) NS (Sec.A questionnaire)

The differences between the two questionnaires are negligible. In both cases there is a tendency, not quite achieving significance, for the 'avid' group to be more likely than the 'others' to say that they read fewer books than a year previously. In their reasons, given in reply to Q.18, these pupils say that they have too much homework to do in the Secondary school, and therefore not enough time, and there seems no reason to doubt them; 'others' also refer to not liking books as much. 68% of the children in total thought that they now read more than before, compared with 70% in the 'A' questionnaire and 79% in the Primary Questionnaire.

Question 18: Now give your reasons for your answer to  
Question 17

The reasons given were classified in the same way as those given for the same question in questionnaire 'A', and their distribution was almost identical. Reasons for reading more were mainly to do with greater enjoyment, a better choice, and more availability of suitable books. Reasons for reading less were, as explained above, largely



to do with homework and lack of time, though there was some evidence among the boys of less interest in reading than before. Individual examples of phrasing of reasons are often illuminating, but as several are quoted in Chapter 4, they are not repeated here.

Question 19: How much do your parents read?

As in Questionnaire 'A', the figures show no association between the reading of mothers or fathers, as estimated by the pupils, and the sex or avidity of the children. A surprisingly high number, however, 35 out of 81 pupils, changed their estimate of parental reading between the two questionnaires, and as the time interval was too short to permit more than minimal changes in actual adult habits, one must assume that the shifts reflect attitude change. It is unlikely that 'checking up' was done, as reported after Q.16, about book ownership. Table 5.16 shows the changes.

TABLE 5.16 Numbers of pupils increasing or decreasing their estimates of their parents' reading frequency

	between 'A' and 'B'		
	Boys	Girls	<u>Total</u>
Pupils increasing estimate	14	9	23
Pupils decreasing estimate	2	10	12
<u>Total</u>	16	19	35
Using the sign test	p = .004	NS	p = .09 (z=1.69) (corrected)

The probabilities given are those for a two-tailed test, as the direction of difference was not specified in the alternative hypothesis (following Siegel 1956).

The reasons for this unexpected finding are unclear, but when taken together with the changes shown in Table 4.14, it may indicate that the boys who increased the two estimates tended to have a more positive attitude to reading during Secondary Questionnaire B, and treated these last few questions with less flippancy than they had done in Questionnaire A. If they had been trying to impress or please the researcher, the effect would have been seen on questions which were obviously about attitude to reading, especially Q.1. An anti-reading stance by some boys is not unique to this study; it may be an expression of general dislike of school as Ewing found (1981) that at this age attitude to reading and to school correlated quite well. It may be associated with the unsuitability of books offered to boys; Grey (1981) found wide sex differences in thematic content preference even as young as 4 years in Northern Ireland, with boys, unlike girls, uninterested in the themes in the reading schemes, preferring violence and adventure. For 11 - 12 year olds, Gorman et al (1981) found significantly more boys than girls agreeing "I can't find a book I want to read" although there was no sex difference on "I am not interested in books". This would again suggest that the lack of suitable reading matter, as well as rebelliousness and a view of reading as 'feminine', may all play a part in some boys' attitudes.

A supplementary question after Q.19 asked "If you know any other grown-ups who read a lot, write them down here." Although 22 girls responded to this invitation and only 15 boys, the tendency was not significant, as it had been in Questionnaire 'A'. Those who named other reading adults usually mentioned several, often relatives, with occasion-

ally a teacher. There was no evidence of an association between this and reading avidity.

Question 20: Now complete these sentences as truthfully as you can

The responses to the four sentence stems (Gorman et al, 1981) were analysed and gave a distribution very similar to that found earlier, in April. Within broad limits, and bearing in mind the classification difficulties, the percentages in each category were similar to those found in the national study. Once again, 'the place I like to be when I am reading' tended to be the bedroom, and peace and quiet were stressed. There were demands that books should be more exciting, and complaints about the difficulty of 'getting into' a new book and of judging a book before reading it and thus choosing effectively. Some of the comments seem worth quoting in full: "If you have problems books bring you into someone else's world. They capture your feeling and have you believing things as though it was happening to your own friend" (sic). "I wish that books were more adventures (sic) and truthful. The book covers always deceive you ... If we didn't have to do so much we would have more time for reading." "I dislike books that I have to read." "The thing I like best about reading is that it is an enjoyment where you don't have to be energetic about." "... you can read anywhere and at any time and you get a great deal of choice.

## SUMMARY

Results show that on all questions except those on book ownership and parental reading frequency, the answers to the two questionnaires were sufficiently similar to give confidence in their reliability and validity. Q.16 and Q.19 may reflect changes of attitude amongst boys in the sample.

There are significant sex differences throughout, with girls showing a more positive attitude to reading, and more likely to read magazines or comics or newspapers. They are more likely to be reading a book 'now', and to have just finished reading a book. They are also more likely than boys to own a greater number of books.

The avid group of 15 readers are more likely to have read their book before, and therefore perhaps more likely in general to re-read books. They are more likely to have bought something from the school bookshop, and more likely to own more books. There is a positive relationship between reading category and reading frequency, with a contingency coefficient of 0.37.

## CHAPTER SIX : THE BOOK FORM EXPERIMENT

## CHAPTER SIX : THE BOOK FORM EXPERIMENT

One of the purposes of this investigation was to test the hypothesis that the use of Book Forms by pupils increases voluntary reading. It was felt that they might give evidence to the pupil of adult interest and approval of the reading habit, might provide the occasion and stimulus for informal inquiry, advice and general discussion about books in school, and might encourage both a 'bookish climate' and an element of competition amongst readers.

The Book Form was based on the Reading Record Form (Ingham 1980), where the finding that its use increased awareness of books and authors is quoted. The controlled experiment reported here leads to the conclusion that the Book Form did not have any effect on amount of voluntary reading, but it nevertheless shed considerable light on the reasons these eleven to twelve year olds gave for the books they chose.

The year group (n = 85) was divided into two matched halves. Pupils were pre- and post-tested for amount of voluntary reading undertaken by means of the Secondary Questionnaires. Two boys and two girls were absent when the Secondary Questionnaire B was completed. During the experimental period of six weeks one group was encouraged to take and fill in Book Forms whenever they chose a book from the school library or their English class library. Some of them also completed forms relating to books they had obtained from sources outside school. The forms contained quickly answered questions on why the book had been chosen, how much had been read and whether it had been enjoyed. The other group acted as control.

Both groups used the same school library, each pupil having one library lesson there each week. The same two English teachers and one remedial specialist taught in both half years. Social backgrounds of pupils were equivalent, as were the mean scores on the English and Maths tests administered on the instructions of the local education authority during the final year at junior school. Distribution of avid and less frequent readers, as assessed by the A Questionnaire, was equivalent, as was distribution of the sexes.

TABLE 6.1 Comparison of experimental and control groups

		Expt. gp.	Cont. gp
Social class of father	Non-manual:	17 pupils	19 pupils
	Manual:	23 "	22 "
Mean raw score:NFER Reading Test AD		28.4	28.8
	(Watts/1954)		
Mean raw score:			
Vernon Graded Arithmetic		40.1	42.7
	(Vernon 1949)		
Voluntary reading category	0:	6 pupils	4 pupils
(A Q'aire)			
" " "	1:	16 "	19 "
" " "	2:	20 "	20 "
Distribution of sexes	Girls:	21 "	20 "
	Boys:	20 "	20 "

Of those who were absent for the B Questionnaire, three were in the control group; the one boy in the experimental group would, on book form evidence, probably have been in category one, as he was for the A Questionnaire. As the following table shows, the use of book forms did not make any difference to the number of books read.

TABLE 6.2 Voluntary reading at the end of the experiment

N = 81	Expt.gp.	Cont.gp
Voluntary reading category (B Q'aire) 0:	6	7 pupils
1:	18(19)	14
2:	17	19

A total of 56 book forms were returned, from 23 pupils (7 boys and 16 girls). One girl returned eight forms. One cannot assume that those 19 pupils in the experimental group who did not return forms had read no books during the six week period, as completion of the forms could not be made compulsory, and some were filled in but never returned. Although pupils were encouraged to complete forms for books obtained from sources outside school as well, clearly few did so: of the 56 books recorded only 6 were not issued by the school.

The second question was "Why did you choose this book?" Eleven categories of choice were given, together with an open "Another reason - (write it here)"

The tabulated results show that readers rarely (six times) needed to use the last category. The reasons for book choice listed were developed from the analysis by Ingham (1980) of responses to the relevant open-ended question in



her Reading Record Form, and pupils had no difficulty in selecting one, or, more usually, several, of those given.

TABLE 6.3 Reasons for book choice

	<u>Chosen</u>
a) I have read other books by the same author:	22 times
b) I have read other books in the same series:	17
c) I chose it because I liked the cover :	12
d) I chose it because I liked the title :	13
e) I chose it because I liked the size of print	5
f) I chose it because I liked the pictures :	2
g) I read a page or so and liked it :	13
h) I am interested in what the book is about :	16
i) I have heard some of it read aloud	
or seen it on TV :	3
j) I have read it before :	5
k) Someone told me it was good :	9
l) Another reason (write it here) :	6
<u>Total choices given in respect of 56 books</u>	123

It was considered that reasons c, d, e and f were, if given without any of the 'better' reasons, likely to form a poor basis for choice of an enjoyable or informative book. The hypothesis was therefore formed that such reasons would be associated with the books concerned being left unfinished, or disliked, to a greater extent than others.

TABLE 6.4 Reasons for book choice x reading to the end

	Books read to the end	Books not finished	<u>Total</u>
Books chosen for 'poor' reasons	1	5	6
Books chosen for 'good' reasons	40	10	50
<u>Total</u>	41	15	56
Chi squared = 7.97 (corrected)			df = 1
p<.01			

TABLE 6.5 Reasons for book choice x books liked/disliked

	Books liked	Books disliked	<u>Total</u>
Books chosen for 'poor' reasons	2	4	6
Books chosen for 'good' reasons	46	4	50
<u>Total</u>	48	8	56
Chi squared = 10.65 (corrected)			df = 1
p<.01			

'Liked' books were those where "It was one of the best books I ever read" or "I liked it very much" or "I quite liked it" had been ticked; 'disliked' books were those where "I did not like it at all" had been marked. There is almost conclusive evidence, therefore, for rejecting the null hypothesis and for concluding that 'poor' reasons are associated with books being unfinished, and with books being disliked.

Question 6 asked "How difficult was it to read?" there being five categories ranging from "Very easy" to "Very difficult". These forms giving 'good' reasons tended to rate the books as easy, and those giving 'poor' reasons were more likely to rate their books as difficult, as the

following table shows.

TABLE 6.6 Reasons for book choice x books rated

	difficult/easy		
	Books rated		
	Difficult	Easy	<u>Total</u>
Books chosen for 'poor' reasons	4	2	6
Books chosen for 'good' reasons	13	37	50
<u>Total</u>	17	39	56
Chi squared = 2.49 (corrected)			df = 1      NS

The results are not, however, statistically significant, so the null hypothesis cannot be rejected.

#### SUMMARY

The experiment showed that the group which used book forms read no more (as assessed by questions 4 and 9 on the Secondary Questionnaire) than the controls. No judgement was made of any "improved awareness of books and authors" or "added interest in books" (see Chapter 1), but these and other less measurable benefits from book form use are possible.

The value of such use, it is suggested, lies in the information the forms give about the process of choosing. It can be concluded that those who chose for superficial reasons only tend not to finish, and to dislike the books they have selected. It is suggested that this is because their choices are, for them, inappropriate. We can assume that if the heavy investment involved in broaching an unknown title is not usually repaid with satisfaction and

pleasure gained, these readers will not remain so for long. They may continue to read comics, magazines and newspapers, but they will abandon their efforts to tackle books. The decline in book reading between the ages of ten and fourteen is well documented: if a faulty strategy for choosing is one of the reasons for it, the solution may be that teachers and librarians should actively instruct children in how to choose from the vast and intimidating array that confronts them in any library.

## CHAPTER SEVEN : THE DIARIES

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It has already been said that in some ways the most reliable way of establishing relative amounts of voluntary reading undertaken by subjects is to administer a diary. The diary format enables the researcher to calculate the length and frequency of leisure time spent reading, rather than the number of books read. Although the questions in the Secondary questionnaire were an improvement over the feats of memory asked for in the Primary questionnaire, neither measure took account of the different lengths of books. A pupil who had spent every available moment reading War and Peace for the previous two weeks, having entered it in response to Q.4 "Are you reading a book now?" would then respond negatively to Q.9 "Have you just finished reading a book?" and thus be classed as only a moderate reader. On the other hand, a pupil who was reading and had read two 12 page 'easy reader' booklets from the Club or Trend series would be category 2.

The diary technique avoids this difficulty, and provided that it is administered sufficiently often, is a valid measure on its own. It may be, however, that during one particular week a subject is 'between books' and reads little in contrast to his normal habit; it may be that a subject reads avidly every day except, because of other commitments, Thursdays and Sundays, and the diary happens to be administered with reference to those two days. It is therefore desirable that the diary should be given at least three, and preferably five or six times over two or three weeks, in order to be both reliable and valid as a measure of voluntary reading.

In the event such frequency was not possible. Pupils completed diaries on the day following Tuesday 20th April, Sunday 25th April, and Wednesday 26th May, and their answers referred to those three days. Completing the diary form took about 40 minutes of lesson time on each occasion, and it was felt that an activity which taught nothing could not be imposed more often. Used not on their own but in conjunction with data gathered by other methods, the diaries were nonetheless thought to be valid.

The model followed was adapted from that given in Smalley (1958) and also used in the Birmingham University Survey of Children's Habits, reported in Curr, Hallworth and Wilkinson (1962 and 1964). Each pupil was given a double-sided sheet of A4 paper, marked from 7a.m. to 10.45p.m. in quarter hours. Four columns were headed 'All the things I did', 'With whom', 'Where' and 'Special details'. The forms were filled in anonymously, and stress was laid on this by the researcher; during the analysis of results names were established by the comparison of handwriting with that on the questionnaire and by position in the pile of collected sheets. Pupils were told that the data was needed to find out what youngsters liked to do in their spare time; they had already filled in the Children's Personality Questionnaire, which consists of forced choices like:

"Would you rather be an actor or a big game hunter?" and so were prepared to accept another exercise of the same kind without associating it with reading. For this reason it seems likely that the diaries did not suffer from attempts to please the researcher by over-estimating time spent with books.

In addition, pupils were told that if they did not wish to say what they had done at a particular time, they could rule a line through that section. Very few did so; others admitted to smoking, fighting and ringing doorbells and running off amongst their activities in a way that suggested that they felt free to be truthful; examination conditions made it unlikely that they were merely boasting to each other or trying to shock. Where other names were quoted as being involved in an activity, the responses of these friends nearly always tallied; where TV programmes had been watched, the viewing schedules showed that the programmes had indeed been transmitted at, or within a quarter hour, of the time claimed. About 3% of the responses, however, were inaccurate, and in these cases the child tended to be demonstrably wrong throughout his diary; whether through misunderstanding instructions, mischievousness, or a poor memory was not clear. One diary was discarded because of this.

For the analysis, the number of quarter hours spent reading books, comics, magazines or newspapers, and in a few cases merely being 'in the library', were summed. Those pupils who scored four or more (i.e. one hour plus) or who read on at least two out of the three days, totalled 32. If they were also classed as category 2 on both Secondary A and Secondary B questionnaires, they comprised the 'avid' group of fifteen used in the work on personality.

In fact those who read at all on one day tended to read on the other days as well, although the times of day and type of reading matter might be quite different. In respect of other activities, most children had similar patterns: they arrived home soon after 4p.m., did homework for about



an hour, then 'played out', had tea at about 5.30 to 6p.m. and went to bed between 9.30 and 10p.m. Of the 84 eleven to 12 year olds in the school, four were absent on one or more of the days when the diary was administered, and one had his diary rejected because of prima facie unreliability and lack of validity when compared with television programme schedules. 51 pupils recorded some reading, and 28 mentioned none at all over the three days, though it is possible that some of these latter had either read briefly and forgotten it, or had glanced through a comic or newspaper but had not thought it worth including as a quarter hour activity.

The reading that occurred often took place early in the morning, or in bed last thing at night. An impression was gained that for a few children much of the time at home, even meals, was spent alone; although pets were often mentioned, sometimes the parents and the rest of the family scarcely seemed to exist. When these children 'played out' for long hours, they may have been seeking company as well as recreation.

The total time spent reading on the three different days was as follows:

Tuesday	:	83 quarter hours
Sunday	:	75 quarter hours
Wednesday	:	157 quarter hours
Chi squared = 38.9 $p < .01$		

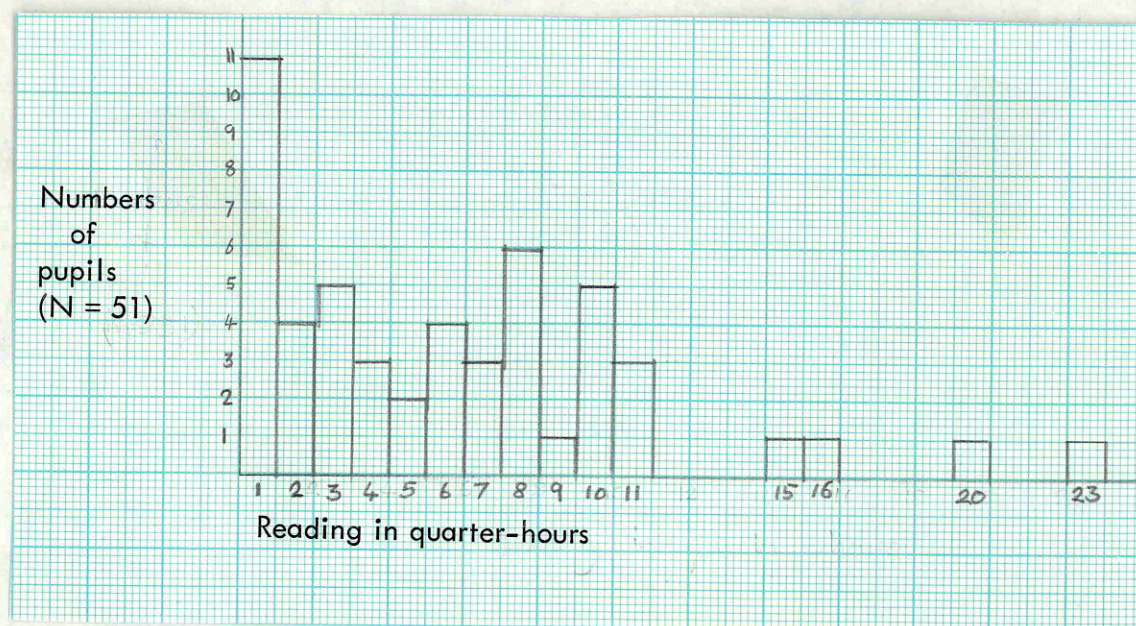
It will be seen that the fact that more time was available on Sunday does not seem to have affected the total; indeed when one remembers that most children would have had various homework tasks to do on Tuesday, but that such homework is not included in the figures, the lack of difference is more remarkable. (Some pupils, of course, left Friday's homework

until Sunday). The discrepancy between Wednesday and other days is not easily explained. School examinations were taking place during that week, but the figures are obtained from reading done before and after the school day, and during lunch times, not from revision periods between exams.

As there were no lessons, homework was not set on Wednesday, and it may have been that by that stage of the week pupils had decided that further preparation was useless, and so spent the time reading instead.

The sign test was used to compare the number of quarter-hours spent reading before the Book Forms (Tuesday) with the number spent afterwards (Wednesday) but there was no discrepancy; in the experimental group equal numbers of pupils had increased as had decreased their reading. Similarly, the Mann-Whitney U test showed that the experimental group spent no more time reading at the end of the period than the control group.

FIG.7.1 Voluntary reading over three days



## SUMMARY

The total time spent reading over the three days is thus subject to considerable individual variation. In general, the technique of using pupils' diaries in order to collect data on voluntary reading seems a valid one, its main disadvantage being its time-consuming nature. In the research reported here, it helped to establish on a firm basis those children who could be termed 'avid' readers.

Nevertheless, others besides Ingham suggested that the Form might be more than just a record. Baum (1983), who used an adapted version for 7, 8 and 9 year-olds over a term, writes "One especially pleasing outcome was the added interest in books" (page 167) though he gives no evidence for this judgement. He also felt that the Reading Record Form showed that "some children were not choosing books at the appropriate level" (page 166), a finding which supports the discussion on poor choosing strategies in Chapter 6. Ravenscroft (1981) records the same impression, finding that 18 children of 10+, choosing from a large school library, tended to pick books whose readability was higher than their own reading ages.

## CHAPTER EIGHT : THE CHILDREN'S PERSONALITY QUESTIONNAIRE

## CHAPTER EIGHT : THE CHILDREN'S PERSONALITY QUESTIONNAIRE

As has already been described in the previous chapters, during April and May 1982 four measures were administered to the first year pupils of a Catholic comprehensive school in the North West (n = 85). These were:

Secondary Questionnaire A (chapter 4)

Secondary Questionnaire B (chapter 5)

Book Forms (chapter 6)

Diaries (chapter 7)

One further measure, the Children's Personality Questionnaire, is described in this chapter.

Raymond Cattell's Children's Personality Questionnaire, hereafter referred to as the CPQ (Cattell 1973), is published by the Institute of Personality and Ability Testing in Illinois, USA. It is one of a series of well-known and authoritative personality tests by which various separate traits or 'primary factors' are assessed after the subject has answered a minimum of 140 forced-choice questions. The CPQ is the relevant measure for 8 - 13 year olds; the pupils concerned were 11 - 12 years at the time. 84 children were involved, as one boy had left the school since the Secondary Questionnaire A. There are four parallel forms of the CPQ available; half the pupils completed Form A and the other half Form C. This meant that children sitting near each other could be given different questionnaires, but the marking template (as also for Forms B and D) was the same for all. The raw scores were converted to n-stens, which have a normal distribution and a range of 1 - 10, according to tables given in the Handbook (Porter and Cattell, 1979). The

n-sten tables used were those for mixed sexes, but in the event most of the groups examined were of boys only or girls only. This means that the results are slightly conservative so that associations of marginal significance and less may contain some Type II errors. The tests were administered and the results interpreted under the supervision of a clinical psychologist. Each of the 14 personality factors measured by the CPQ is described at length in the Handbook, and for proper familiarity with the concepts involved it is essential to refer to those descriptions. The following list, however, (Table 8.1) gives an indication of the areas covered, with the technical terms in brackets. It should be remembered that these personality traits are not static, though there is in some at least a genetic component; they develop in a child from year to year, and are influenced by education, upbringing and experiences.



TABLE 8.1 The 14 personality factors in brief

<u>Low score description</u>	<u>Factor</u>	<u>High score description</u>
Reserved,detached,critical cool (Sizothymia)	A	Warmhearted,outgoing,easy- going, participating (Affectothymia)
Dull, concrete thinking (Low scholastic mental capacity)	B	Bright,abstract thinking (Higher scholastic mental capacity)
Affected by feelings, emotionally less stable easily upset (Low ego strength)	C	Emotionally stable,faces reality,calm,mature (Higher ego strength)
Undemonstrative,deliberate inactive,stodgy (Phlegmatic temperament)	D	Excitable,impatient, demanding,overactive (Excitability)
Obedient,mild,accommodating conforming (Submissiveness)	E	Assertive,aggressive, competitive,stubborn (Dominance)
Sober,prudent,serious, taciturn (Desurgency)	F	Enthusiastic,heedless, happy-go-lucky (Surgency)
Disregards rules,expedient (Weaker super-ego strength)	G	Conscientious,persevering, staid,rule-bound (Stronger super-ego strength)
Shy,threat-sensitive,timid restrained (Threctia)	H	Venturesome,socially bold, uninhibited,spontaneous (Parmia)
Tough-minded,self-reliant, realistic,no-nonsense (Harria)	I	Tender-minded,dependent, over-protected,sensitive (Premsia)
Vigorous,goes readily with group, zestful, given to action (Zeppia)	J	Circumspect individualism, reflective,internally restrained (Coasthenia)

Forthright,natural,artless	N	Astute,artful,shrewd
sentimental (Artlessness)		(Shrewdness)
Self-assured,placid,secure	0	Apprehensive,self-reproach-
complacent,serene		ing,insecure,worrying,
(Untroubled adequacy)		troubled (Guilt proneness)
Uncontrolled,lax,follows	Q3	Controlled,socially precise,
own urges,careless of		following self-image (High
social rules (Low integra-		self-concept control)
tion)		
Relaxed,tranquil,torpid,	Q4	Tense,frustrated,driven,
unfrustrated (Low ergic		over-wrought (High ergic
tension)		tension)

Adapted from Porter and Cattell (1979) Table 1, page 10, and CPQ Test Profile.

Many of these factors are discussed in more depth below.

One of the reasons for giving the CPQ to these pupils was that it seemed likely that an association might be found between particular aspects of personality and avidity or infrequency of reading. The popular stereotype of the child who 'always has his/her nose in a book' is of a studious introvert, content with quiet and solitary pursuits. This view is echoed by Leng (1968), whose opinion is discussed in Chapter 1. Thus one might predict low scores on, perhaps, Factors A, D, E, F and high scores on Factors G, J, and Q3. Recent opinion, however, suggests that this is inaccurate; among US adults at least, "the heaviest readers are the people most active in everything" (Barbara Tuchmon, page 8). Moreover, "a book reader is more likely to be a socially integrated person ... the non-reader tends to be lonely and isolated" (Jan Hadja, page 44). Both these comments come from



Cole and Gold (1979) whose study is discussed in the review of the literature. When reviewing this booklet, Reading in America - 1978, Ingham (1981c) noted that the findings were very similar to those of her own study of British 10 - 13 year olds, reported in Books and Reading Development (1981a) and her M.Phil dissertation (1981b).

These clues as to the personality traits of avid readers were not enough, however, to enable hypotheses to be formulated other than tentatively. Moreover, the findings of the Primary Questionnaire (Chapter 3) indicated a slight but not significant, tendency for those who preferred to spend spare time on their own, worried about the opinions of others and did not make friends easily, to list more books than others. After a study of the detailed analysis of the conceptual basis for each Factor given in the CPQ Handbook, and because these children were the same subjects who had completed the Primary Questionnaire, it was predicted that reading avidity would be found to correlate with the following:

- 1) a low score on Factor A (prefers things to people, likes working alone, is introspective
- 2) a low score on Factor F (introspective, daydreaming, reflective)
- 3) a high score of Factor J (reflective, 'The Hamlet factor').

The phrases in parentheses are selective quotations from the Handbook which show the reasons for the predictions; the repetition of the word 'introspective' demonstrates the difficulty of describing the separate factors adequately and without adopting the terms of character stereotypes of folk wisdom.

In the event, all three hypotheses were rejected and for

Factors A and J significant associations in the opposite direction were found, indicating that conventional ideas of 'the bookworm' had played a large part in the predictions. Moreover, several other associations of great interest were noted, and these are reported in this chapter. The Student's t test for unrelated scores was used, and the level of significance set at 5% in a two-tailed test, as the hypotheses were based on rather inconclusive evidence.

#### ORIGINAL AVID GROUP (BOYS + GIRLS) versus OTHERS

The first comparison carried out was between the scores on all 14 CPQ factors of 15 'avid' readers and all the others. The group of avid readers was the same group used for comparative purposes throughout this study, consisting of 12 girls and 3 boys who had all:

- 1) quoted a book title as 'being read' in Secondary  
Questionnaires A and B
- 2) quoted a book title as 'just finished' in Secondary  
Questionnaires A and B
- 3) had read either for at least 4 quarter hours, or on 2 of  
the 3 days for which diaries were completed  
and
- 4) had completed at least 3 Book Forms if in the  
'experimental' half year.

The results of the t test showed no significant differences between this group and the others on any of the personality factors, so that the null hypothesis was retained.

## SEX DIFFERENCES

As the 'avid' group was four-fifths female, it was decided to investigate sex differences in the population being studied (41 boys and 43 girls) to see if these had the same influence on personality scores as they had earlier been shown to exert on responses to various items on Secondary Questionnaires A and B. Table 8.2 gives the results.

Table 8.2 Personality differences between girls and boys  
( 'Cheshire group', n = 84)

<u>Girls'</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>CPQ</u>	<u>Boys'</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>p</u>
<u>mean</u>		<u>Factor</u>	<u>mean</u>			
<u>score</u>			<u>score</u>			
6.1	1.78	A	4.5	1.82	3.85	<.002
5.9	1.25	B	5.3	1.51	NS	
5.7	1.46	C	4.8	1.87	2.29	<.05
4.7	1.82	D	6.6	1.82	-4.63	<.002
3.7	1.76	E	6.1	1.66	-6.36	<.002
5.4	2.12	F	6.9	1.80	-3.40	<.002
5.1	1.97	G	3.7	1.77	3.40	<.002
4.8	2.02	H	4.8	1.97	NS	
6.5	2.08	I	4.6	1.87	4.45	<.002
4.5	1.65	J	5.5	1.76	-2.70	<.01
5.2	1.78	N	6.6	1.66	-3.80	<.002
4.2	1.82	Ø	4.6	2.01	NS	
5.6	1.63	Q3	4.2	1.45	4.07	<.002
5.3	1.79	Q4	6.2	2.07	-2.04	<.05

These differences conform fairly closely to the US norms for sex differences given by Cattell. There are no British norms, but Table 8.3, taken from a table of cross-cultural comparisons given in the Handbook, gives an indication of the direction of such differences as exist, both between girls and boys and between the two countries.

Table 8.3 Personality differences between boys and girls in the UK and the USA

<u>CHESHIRE GROUP</u>		<u>BRITISH CHILDREN</u>		<u>CPQ FACTOR</u>	<u>US CHILDREN</u>	
<u>Girls'</u>	<u>Boys'</u>	<u>Girls'</u>	<u>Boys'</u>		<u>Girls'</u>	<u>Boys'</u>
<u>mean</u>	<u>mean</u>	<u>mean</u>	<u>mean</u>		<u>mean</u>	<u>mean</u>
<u>score</u>	<u>score</u>	<u>score</u>	<u>score</u>		<u>score</u>	<u>score</u>
n = 43	n = 41	n = 167	n = 229		n = 761	n = 773
6.1	4.5	4.7	5.1	A	7.4	6.7
5.9	5.3	*	*	B	6.6	6.4
5.7	4.8	5.0	5.6	C	6.2	6.2
4.7	6.6	6.2	6.2	D	3.7	4.4
3.7	6.1	6.1	6.4	E	3.2	4.6
5.4	6.9	5.4	5.8	F	4.3	5.4
5.1	3.7	4.5	4.9	G	6.8	6.1
4.8	4.8	4.6	5.5	H	5.6	5.7
6.5	4.6	4.9	5.1	I	4.7	3.2
4.5	5.5	6.7	6.3	J	4.2	4.0
5.2	6.6	6.1	6.0	N	3.3	4.3
4.2	4.6	6.5	5.7	Ø	4.1	4.1
5.6	4.2	4.9	5.0	Q3	7.1	6.4
5.3	6.2	6.0	5.9	Q4	4.1	4.5

The figures for British children are from Wilcox R. and Smith J.L., 1972; Factor B scores (\*) have been omitted by the researchers because B is not strictly a personality

measure. The Cheshire group was slightly older, at eleven and a half to twelve and a half years, than the U.S. children who were ten and a half years, but age trends are so slight, according to Cattell, as to be negligible, at least among Americans.

It will be seen that sex differences, substantial for some factors, operate on the whole in the same direction across the three groups in Table 8.3. Porter and Cattell (1979) write "girls are warmer, more emotionally sensitive, and have higher superego strength and self-sentiment development. Boys are significantly more dominant, excitable, shrewd, tense and surgent." In other words, US girls are A+, G+, I+, Q3+, D-, E-, F-, N-, and Q4 in comparison to boys, and these differences are significant at  $p < .001$ . Table 8.2 shows that the Cheshire group follows this pattern, except that the differences on Q4 is less marked ( $p < .05$ ) and the girls are also C+ ( $p < .05$ ) and J- ( $p < .01$ ).

It is not within the scope of this research to explore why these differences exist. They are reported here to explain why it was decided to eliminate their effect upon the dependent variable, personality, by investigating one sex at a time. On those items discussed below, where it proved impossible to control for sex, there are nonetheless some interesting results, but when interpreting them one must remember that some of the 'pro-reading' groups contained many more girls than boys. An overall view of all the CPQ results is presented in Table 8.4, where all the group 'code' numbers are listed.

#### AVID GIRLS vs OTHER GIRLS (1G)

The next step therefore was to compare those members of the original 'avid' group who were female ( $n = 12$ ) with all the other girls ( $n = 31$ ). This group is coded 1G in Table 8.4. The avid girls were higher on Factor B ( $t = 2.47$ ,  $p < .02$ ) and on Factor E ( $t = 2.05$ ,  $p < .05$ ) Factor B is a small-scale, unspeeded intelligence test, included in the CPQ more to give completeness to the total personality profile than to be of predictive value on its own. Most of the 'pro-reading' groups (except avid boys) were more intelligent than those they were being compared with, as were all girls versus all boys, although the latter comparison at  $t = 1.93$  is not significant. Factor B, then, is not an aspect of personality as usually defined, and of less interest in the present study than the other factors.

Factor E, however, is dominance (E+) versus submissiveness (E-), a well-known aspect of human (and animal) personality. These avid girls are therefore more like boys in this respect; they are more assertive, self-assured, independent, stubborn, aggressive, competitive, unconventional, rebellious, headstrong and admiration-demanding. They are less considerate, diplomatic, obedient, mild, easily led, docile, accommodating, conformist, easily upset by authority and humble. They tend to be more individualistic and to try to be leaders, not followers.

Why this should be so is a matter for reasoning a posteriori as the association was not predicted beforehand. It may be that reading, being 'lost in a book', is an activity in which the dominant girl can be in control of events, can adopt any role she pleases, can assert and exert

her independence of mind by forming her own ideas through what she reads, rather than by being pressurized into accepting the conventional mores of her family and peer-group. High dominance is generally associated with good sports performance, with creativity in the arts and sciences, but with academic achievement only at the graduate stage; at school, high achievement is correlated with E-.

#### AVID BOYS versus OTHER BOYS (2B when enlarged)

Following this, a comparison was sought between avid boys and the other boys, once again controlling in this way for the gender effect. There were only 3 boys, however, in the original 'avid' group, against whom to compare the remaining 38, and it was hardly surprising that such an unbalanced sample produced no significant trends (though it was interesting that the 3 avid boys for once had a lower mean score on the B factor, intelligence, than the others). The group of avid boys was therefore enlarged. Each boy was given a number in the range 4 to 22, this being the total score from both secondary questionnaires A and B, calculated thus:

<u>Question</u>	<u>Range</u>
1 (How much do you like reading?)	1-5
4 (Are you reading a book now?)	0-1
9 (Have you just finished a book?)	0-1
14 (How often do you read for pleasure?)	1-4

Maximum score for each questionnaire = 11

All those boys scoring 17+ points were categorised as 'keen' readers (n = 17) after a check to see that they had mentioned doing some reading at least in the diaries.

This enlarged group of keen/avid boys (2B) was then

compared to the other boys, and found to be lower on Factor D ( $t = -2.36$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and Factor I ( $t = -3.10$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and higher on Factor Q3 ( $t = 2.67$ ,  $p = < .02$ ).

Just as the avid girls were more like the opposite sex than their own in being high on E (on which factor the gender discrepancy was wider than on any other) so the avid boys were thus like girls on Factor D (where the gender difference was the second largest). A low score on D indicates a phlegmatic rather than excitable temperament. It is the opposite of impulsiveness, restlessness, distractibility and attention-getting impatience. D- individuals are undemonstrative, deliberate, inactive and stodgy. They are stoical, complacent, constant, self-effacing and not easily jealous.

The reasons for the low D score amongst avid/keen boys (2B) are not hard to envisage. Reading a book (and the avid groups were book-readers by definition as well as, or even instead of being, periodical readers) takes a certain amount of stamina and perseverance. The reader is required to keep going while during the first few pages the characters, setting and situation are explained. One boy while being interviewed commented "In a library I always look at page 26. If the story hasn't got going by page 26 it won't be any good". Non-fiction works also require a certain calm stamina, and lack the narrative thrust that can impel one through a story once it has been 'got into'.

Reading also necessitates sitting still for long periods and concentrating, so much so that one quality that has already been noticed in readers by recent researchers is the ability to read even while the television is on in the same room, without being distracted (Ingham 1981a, Cole and Gold



1979). Thus the D+ boy (or girl) may find that the payoff in terms of enjoyment does not come fast enough from books.

These boys were also distinguishable from others on Factor I. In this they were unlike the opposite sex, for boys in general score lower than girls on I, and these ones scored lower still. I- indicates someone who is tough-minded rather than tender-minded, one who rejects illusion and is unsentimental, expecting little. The reading boys therefore are self-reliant, taking responsibility, and even 'hard' to the point of cynicism. They act on practical, logical evidence rather than intuition; they keep to the point and do not seek attention in a group, being 'masculine', mature, realistic and unfussy. This factor is substantially environmentally determined and I+ is often the result of an emotionally indulgent, over protective home.

This finding suggests that for these boys at least reading is not a form of escapism, but a way of confronting reality. It may be that the sensitive, dependent boy is unable to tackle an activity as solitary as sustained reading, and requires a hobby which demands less of him and offers the support and help of friends and parents. The self-reliant boy, however, enjoys tackling a book - the metaphor is a useful one - and has the positive, determined, realistic approach needed. He will force the print to yield up its meaning; again one returns to the idea of stamina and a certain aggression.

The third factor on which avid/keen boys were different (2B) from the other boys was Q3. This has the Q label because it has only been firmly established in questionnaire responses, observers of children's behaviour

having found it difficult to rate Q3 from watching them. A high Q3 individual has a definite image of himself by which he purposefully directs his actions. He has will-power, self-control and self-respect; he may be ambitious, self-critical and concerned with how others see him. He is likely to be an effective leader; his Q3-counterparts (at the extreme pole) have a tendency towards juvenile delinquency.

Girls are significantly higher than boys on this factor, so once more the avid boys tend to be more like the opposite sex than their own. High Q3 indicates a purposive thoughtfulness rather than narcissistic, excitable emotionality; such foresight and reflectiveness can, it appears, be induced or increased by careful education in socio-moral values. One might surmise that the avid boys read partly in order to build up their self-concept, their image of the sort of people they are; it is their self-regulation according to this image which distinguishes them from other boys. Reading helps them to interpret their experiences and to 'experience' other ways of being, other possibilities for action. The author provides judgment on these ways of being, and the reader takes note of and ponders the view of life implied. Books therefore furnish these boys with new ideas and experiences which they use to define for themselves the sort of people they are becoming. Boys scoring low on Q3 would be less likely to feel "I am/am not the sort of person who would do that": these avid boys do sometimes feel that, and to some extent regulate their actions accordingly.

## Personality Trends on Individual Measures and Individual Questions

By considering one sex at a time, certain significant differences on particular personality factors have been established. In summary, they are that avid girls are brighter and more assertive than other girls, and that avid boys are more phlegmatic, more realistic and more self-controlling than other boys. Both the avid IG girls group ( $n = 12$ ) and the 2B enlarged avid boys group ( $n = 17$ ) had been selected by considering several measures : responses to different types of questions on Questionnaires A and B, and the diary evidence. It was decided to see if the same trends were distinguishable on each of these measures taken in isolation.

### THE DIARIES : AVID versus INFREQUENT (3B+G)

The diaries were in a sense the most objective measure, as those completing them did not know (and from their comments did not guess) what the researcher was looking for. The diaries measured only the amount of time spent reading, unaffected by subjects' attitude or self-assessments.

There were 20 girls and 9 boys who had been reading books, newspapers, comics or magazines either for a total of at least one hour, or on at least two of the three diary days. In contrast, 9 girls and 23 boys recorded no reading at all during the period. If these two groups are compared, the 29 readers are higher on A ( $t = 3.18, p < .01$ ), B ( $t = 3.91, p < .002$ ), C ( $t = 3.08, p < .01$ ) and Q3 ( $t = 3.07, p < .01$ ). The readers are lower on D ( $t = 3.72, p < .002$ ) and on J ( $t = -2.35, p < .05$ ).

These results are suspect, however, because of the preponderance of girls in the reading group, and of boys in the non-reading group. One can control for sex effect here either by comparing boys and girls separately, or by choosing at random 9 reading girls out of the 20 and 9 non-reading boys out of the 23, in order to balance the sexes.

It was decided to use the latter method so that group numbers were not reduced too much, using random number tables. The readers, ( $n = 18$ ), were now higher on Factor B ( $t = 3.22, p < .01$ ) and Factor C ( $t = 2.15, p < .05$ ) than the non-readers. They tended to be lower on Factor D, as the avid boys had been, but the trend was not quite significant ( $t = -2.01$ ).

That readers tend to be more intelligent than non-readers is already well documented. C+ indicates an emotionally stable individual, calm, mature and facing reality. He or she is constant rather than changeable in attitudes and interests, and does not let emotional needs obscure the realities of a situation; he or she adjusts to the facts, does not worry, and shows restraint in avoiding difficulties. C+ is also known as ego strength; thus a child scoring low on C would be more likely to lack perseverance, to be easily frustrated and dissatisfied, and to evade his or her responsibilities. It may be that the explanation for why the readers are C+ and the non-readers C- is simply that reading is a solitary activity which often requires perseverance and a high tolerance of frustration; those who are easily annoyed, discouraged or put off find it more difficult and so read less.

#### QUESTION 1: ATTITUDE TO READING (4G and 5B)

Question 1, "How much do you like reading?", was originally intended as an introduction to Questionnaires A and B, to set the scene rather than as an item of much value on its own. It was thought however that the 5-point scale responses might be an indication of general attitude to reading, unadulterated by any aspects of frequency of actual reading undertaken. Once again when comparing answers the difficulties of gender imbalance appeared. 4 boys answered 'Dislike' or 'Dislike very much', whereas of the 57 pupils who replied 'Like' or 'Like very much' 33 were girls. It was therefore necessary to control for gender, but only 3 girls had answered 'Not sure' in the questionnaires, and none had recorded dislike. The sexes were therefore examined separately, with these three girls being compared to the 33 other girls (who had registered a positive liking for reading). Such a comparison is not ideal, but it seemed preferable to choosing at random 3 'liking' girls, 3 'not sure or disliking' boys, and 3 'liking' boys, from so many. The total numbers of answers are less than expected because those who changed their minds between Questionnaire A and Questionnaire B were excluded.

The girls who liked reading were C+ ( $t = 2.38$ ,  $p < .05$ ) F+ ( $t = 3.07$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and J- ( $t = -2.83$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Factor C has been discussed above, and presumably the same reasons apply. F+ indicates surgency, and enthusiastic, heedless, happy-go-lucky personality. A high F person is talkative, cheerful, frank, expressive and light-hearted. He or she is quick and alert, rather than sober and cautious. Low F children are rated as day-dreaming, secretive and subdued, whereas high F individuals may have, or have had, an easier,

less punishing, more optimism-creating environment, and less exacting standards or responsibilities expected of them.

Thus the low-F girls who were 'not sure' about their attitude to reading seem to have been expressing their general caution and lack of enthusiasm about anything: perhaps they would have responded in the same way to any comparable question, whatever the subject-matter. Equally the girls who liked reading, or liked it very much, probably showed the same fervour about many other things, though this does not mean that their zestfulness was any the less genuine.

The same girls also scored significantly lower than the others on Factor J. This indicates vigour, zest and a liking for group action; a person who likes to go with the group rather than be individualistic. Cattell and Porter write that the J+ child "prefers to do things on his own, is physically and intellectually fastidious, thinks over his mistakes and how to avoid them, tends not to forget if he is unfairly treated, has private views differing from the group, but prefers to keep in the background to avoid argument, and knows he or she has fewer friends". The J- child is more likely to accept the common standards of the group, and it may be that the girls were simply expressing this when they claimed to like reading. In the same way the three who were 'not sure' were perhaps just circumspect, trying to be exact, evaluating coldly rather than following the herd. A single book that has proved a disappointment might be enough to make these girls 'not sure' about reading.

Subsequently the boys' responses to Question 1 were examined, and once again only those replies ( $n = 70$ ) which were the same on Questionnaires A and B were taken into account. There were ten boys who answered 'Dislike very much', 'Dislike' or 'Not sure' both times to the question on attitude to reading, and 24 who answered 'Like' or 'Like very much'. The boys who said they liked reading were lower on Factor D ( $t = -2.33$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and higher on Factor Q3 ( $t = 2.32$ ,  $p < .05$ ). They were therefore less excitable and more controlled than those boys with a more negative attitude to reading, and thus shared the characteristics of the (enlarged) group of avid/keen (2B) boys created by summing points from several different measures.

Question 2: READERS OF MAGAZINES, COMICS AND NEWSPAPERS (6B)

Reading periodicals does not seem to require the same stamina as book-reading, and one might therefore expect the personality correlations to be somewhat different, and worth investigating. Question 2 asked whether these non-book materials were often read, and the answers form the only data available from this study on the reading of ephemera, although the Primary Questionnaire had also probed this area one year before. Sixty-three of the replies were positive and twelve negative, the remaining six being inconsistent between the two questionnaires A and B. Unfortunately for the purposes of analysis, there were no girls who did not read periodicals, the 12 being all boys, so that only the boys' results could be used to explore personality trends. The only significant difference on this measure between the reading and non-reading boys was on Factor B, intelligence, where  $t = 3.34$ ,  $p < .01$ , indicating that the magazine, comic and newspaper readers tended to be brighter.

This finding supports the idea that it is book-reading, rather than reading as a general mental process, which demands certain qualities of personality, and thus is more difficult and less rewarding for some personalities than for others.

Question 14: How often do you read during a week? (7G and 8B)

This question refers to time spent reading rather than attitude towards it, but is a less pure and objective measure than the Diaries, as it involves self-assessment and the pupil's self-image. Once again, imbalance between the sexes was such that boys and girls had to be considered separately. There were four available answers, but all but 3 of the girls consistently (on both questionnaires A and B) gave replies in the two higher categories, 'Every day' or 'Several times a week'. The 3 girls answered 'Once a week'; no girl thought she read for pleasure 'Not very often'. In order to make the group numbers less uneven, those who consistently replied 'Every day' ( $n = 21$ ) were compared with those girls ( $n = 18$ ) who thought they read less frequently. The results were that the 'Every day' readers were lower on Factor D ( $t = -2.38, p < .05$ ) and also on Factor J ( $t = -2.92, p < .01$ ). With regard to the former finding, this brings them into line with the avid boys (enlarged group, 2B) the boys who liked reading (question 1, 5B) and, later, with the boys who thought they read frequently. (8B). with regard to the latter (J-), the 21 share this tendency with the girls who 'liked reading'. Both Factors D and J have been discussed above, and presumably the reasons for the 'Every day' readers scoring in this way are similar to those given previously.



The division of the boys into two groups was done on the basis of those who answered 'Every day' or 'Several times a week' ( $n = 25$ ) versus the 13 others ('Once a week' or 'Not very often'). The boys who thought they read frequently (8B) were higher on Factor B ( $t = 3.52, p < .002$ ), lower on Factor C ( $t = 3.52, p < .002$ ), lower on Factor D ( $t = -2.31, p < .05$ ) and higher on Factor Q3 ( $t = 2.46, p < .02$ ). In this the boys are the same as the other groups of boys examined; the exact congruence can be most easily seen by an examination of Table 8.4.

#### AVID GIRLS (ENLARGED GROUP) VERSUS OTHER GIRLS (9G)

Finally, for the sake of completeness, it was thought worthwhile to enlarge the original group of avid girls ( $n = 12$ ) in the same way that the avid boys' group has been enlarged. This new group was therefore based on a points system derived from the two questionnaires (A and B) only, uninfluenced, as the original group of avid girls had been, by the data from the Diaries and Book Forms. Possible points, gained from answers to Question 1, 4, 9 and 14, ranged from 4 to 22. The boys' enlarged group has been formed from all those who scored 17 points or more versus the others, but the girls' group consisted of those who scored 20 points or more ( $n = 80$ ) versus the other girls ( $n = 21$ ), in order to make the groups being compared the same size.

The enlarged group of avid girls (9G) tended to be rated low on Factor D ( $t = -3.16, p < .01$ ), high on Factor G ( $t = 2.14, p < .05$ ), low on Factor J ( $t = -2.17, p < .05$ ) and low on Factor N ( $t = -2.54, p < .02$ ). D- and J- have been discussed above, but G+ and N- do not occur as significant

trends in any of the other groupings examined, and consequently call for explanation.

G+ indicates superego strength or character, a conscientious, persistent, moralistic, staid, rule-bound and perservering person. Such a child is determined and responsible rather than fickle and frivolous. He or she is emotionally disciplined rather than self-indulgent, and dominated by a sense of duty rather than undependable. It may have been a misplaced sense of duty that led these girls to decide that they liked reading so much and that they read for pleasure every day, or thereabouts; it is worth noting however that if those who score highly on Question 1 and Question 14 are compared with the low-scorers in mixed-sex groups (i.e. more girls), the same significant tendency towards Factor G+ appears.

A low score on Factor N indicates naivete as opposed to shrewdness. N- means a forthright, unpretentious, natural, artless, sentimental person, who is sincere and genuine but may be socially clumsy. She or he lacks a calculating mind, becomes warmly emotionally involved with people, is spontaneous and has simple tastes. Such a child tends to be without self-insight and unskilled in analyzing motives; these avid girls are likely to be content with what comes, with a blind trust in human nature. High-N individuals are self-sufficient and 'street-wise'.

Once again it is difficult to be confident of the reasons for this association. All the girls in the enlarged avid group had been rated at within 2 points of the maximum, i.e. between 20 and 22 points, so that they were a relatively extreme group, despite being so numerous. It might be a kind of canniness that led other girls not to commit them-

selves so fervently. Alternatively, perhaps these children would in a few years' time be the devoted women readers of Mills & Boon-type romantic fiction, an audience whose unquenchable thirst for such literature has been well documented by Peter Mann (1969). One of Mann's respondents wrote of these books, "They all leave one with a satisfactory sense of pleasant and hopeful existence": such an outcome might be particularly craved by those low on Factor N, and indeed one has the impression that girls who read every day, and with such avowed liking, may be in the grip of something more like a craving than a desire merely to widen their knowledge and experience.

Before conclusions are drawn from all these varied personality factor associations, Table 8.4 provides a diagrammatic summary of the relationships which have been indicated.

TABLE 8.4 Significant differences between various groups  
of readers and their counterparts on the personality  
factors

<u>Low (-)</u>	<u>Factor</u>	<u>High (+)</u>
	A	
	B	.....1G, 3B+G, 6B, 8B
	C	.....3B+G, 4G
2B, 5B, 7G, 8B, 9G .....	D	
	E	.....1G
	F	.....4G
	G	.....9G
	H	
2B .....	I	
4G, 7G, 9G .....	J	
9G .....	N	
	O	
	Q3	.....2B, 5B, 8B
	Q4	

### Pairs of Groups

1G = Girls (original avid group) vs. all other girls

2B = Boys (enlarged avid group) vs. all other boys

3B+G= Readers according to Diaries (balanced sexes) vs. non-readers

4G = Girls who liked reading vs. 'not sure'

5B = Boys who liked reading vs. 'not sure/dislike'

6B = Boys reading periodicals vs. non-readers of periodicals

7G = Girls who read frequently (self-assessed) vs. girls who read less often

8B = Boys who read frequently (self-assessed) vs boys who read less often

9G = Girls (enlarged avid group) vs. other girls

Note: All significances are  $p < .05$  (two-tailed test).

Only the tendency of the first-mentioned group in each pair has been shown: the trend of the second group is in the opposite direction.

### SUMMARY

The three hypotheses suggested at the beginning of this chapter, that avid readers would tend towards A-, F- and J+, were all firmly rejected during the course of the investigation. The hypotheses would have been more accurate had the hints given in the research literature (Whitehead 1977, Cole and Gold 1979, Ingham 1981a) and in the 'IE' scores from the Primary Questionnaire, been taken into account when they were formulated. Moreover, it takes time for the separate concepts involved in Cattell's personality factors to be fully understood, and it was only after studying the results of the profiles obtained that the researcher was able to piece together the implications involved in each factor.

It is difficult to label the factors with two or three adjectives which will explain the nature of the dimension being measured, and some familiarity with personality theory and the nature of the testing instrument, the CPQ, would help with the interpretation of this data.

Nine different pairs of groupings are given in Table 8.4. This is not because the first groupings produced unsatisfactory results, but because reading is a multi-stranded activity. Apart from the difficulty of being sure that a group contains the really 'avid' children, one has to distinguish within the concept 'avidity' between liking reading, reading a good deal (numbers of words read, perhaps) and spending a good deal of time reading (or a large proportion of the time available). These aspects can all be judged subjectively, by the pupil's self assessment, or by some relatively objective measure, such as the Diaries. Moreover, there is the question of what counts as reading for pleasure; comics, magazines and newspapers cannot be excluded, but they are not usually thought of as the essence of leisure reading, and indeed modern comics, the main periodicals for 11 - 12 year olds, contain (Taylor 1972) very little in the way of continuous prose or even full sentences. In addition, it soon became clear that the variable of sex had to be controlled for, and groups needed, of course, to be of adequate size for the Student's t test to be appropriate.

The groupings therefore represent an attempt to approach avidity from various angles, and it is interesting that Table 8.4 shows a tendency for them to cluster around certain factors. It is highly likely that the different groupings contain common elements, but the table reveals

some contrasts that are equally enlightening. It appears that the most important tendencies are for the reading groups to be B+, C+, D-, together with J- for girls and Q3- for boys. The strong role of sex differences in this study has already been emphasised, and here again the gregarious liveliness (J-) that makes girls (4G, 7G, 9G) read and think of themselves as readers does not seem to have the same effect on boys, while the controlled self-image (Q3+) which makes boys read and think of themselves as readers (2B, 5B, 8B) works less with girls. It is worth noting that the girls' groups that are low on Factor J are the exact counterpart to the boys' groups which are Q3+. While some girls' groups are near significance in their tendency to be high on Q3, however, there is no particular trend for reading boys to be J-. As explained at the beginning of the chapter, the norms used mean that the probability estimates are somewhat conservative.

The other main findings apply to both boys and girls. That readers, whether of books or periodicals, and whether self-assessed or judged by their record in the Diaries, should be (B+) more intelligent than non-readers is not surprising. It is perhaps interesting however that boys and girls who merely 'liked reading' showed no such tendency. More noteworthy is the fact that those boys and girls whose Diaries revealed that they read a fair amount at home on sample days, as well as the girls who liked reading (3B+G, 4G) were (C+) more emotionally stable, calm and mature, less easily upset, than the others. This association is attributed to the demands of book-reading, and thus is one of the Factors which throws light on what reading requires and involves. Sustained reading requires stamina, persistence,

a vigorously active rather than passive approach, and a high tolerance of frustration. Thus the changeable, emotional C-child would find it more difficult.

The question of reading stamina does not of course arise with comics, magazines and newspapers, so it is significant that the boys who read them (all the girls did) showed no personality trends at all, apart from a higher rating on intelligence than the non-readers of periodicals. This lends support to the idea that an avid reader must be a book reader in the main. When it comes to the last major factor, D-, the evidence is stronger than ever. Nearly all the groups, boys and girls alike, shared the trend towards a low D score, and in five groupings the trend was significant. The impulsive, impatient and demanding child (D+) cannot wait for the delayed rewards and satisfaction of a book, whereas the readers were phlegmatic stoics, able to concentrate on an interior world while appearing undemonstrative, perhaps welcoming mental stimulation while their excitable counterparts suffered from too much.

The remaining factors, though less certain because each is correlated with only one group of readers, bear out this interpretation. E+ shows that girls in particular, who tend to be low in this factor as compared to boys, need a certain aggressiveness if they are to 'actively interrogate' a text and thus wrench its meaning from it. G+ brings in perseverance and self-discipline, qualities which clearly border on the D- range, though it must be admitted that these qualities might also have affected these girls' questionnaire-answering. I- may be associated with avid boys in rather a negative way, in that at the opposite pole are those who are too dependent and over-protected to venture



much into the solitary, self-reliant and unsupportive world of book reading. N- seems to link forthright, artless girls with emotionally appealing fiction, whether it is romantic (using the word to include the Brontes as well as Barbara Cartland) or heroic (Willard Price and so on). The only association which tells us little about the nature of reading is that of the girls who 'liked reading' (4G) with F+. Here the grouping was difficult because only three girls were 'Not sure' and no-one disliked the activity; one must surmise that the F+ relationship exists because girls with an enthusiastic, happy-go-lucky approach tend to be less cautious about committing themselves to liking reading.

Thus nearly all the tendencies mapped in Table 8.4 indicate what book-reading is like, the demands it makes and the sort of children who find it easier or more difficult. It may be of course that reading, or the lack of it, has influenced these pupils' personalities to create such associations, rather than the other way round, but although a child's character is certainly not immutable, this seems less likely. It may be the length and the impenetrability of book-print which make the barrier some cannot cope with; there are few illustrations, and the size and face of type remain the same throughout. What is essential is to remember that the obstacle is there, and to find out as much as possible about its nature so as to mitigate its effects. Knowledge of how children's personalities affect their reading habits and attitudes helps towards this end.

## CHAPTER NINE : CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## CHAPTER NINE - CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As a summary of findings has been given at the end of each chapter, this section concerns itself with the broader implications of those results. The study arose directly from the everyday concerns of a Head of English in a Comprehensive school which stressed the benefit of wide voluntary reading for all pupils. If such reading is desirable, it is not enough merely to recommend it to children and parents. More practical and effective methods of fostering a love of books are available, and are ably summarized in Chambers (1973), where he writes "The idea that all we have to do is to surround children with books and everything else follows automatically is naive." For most, reading is an acquired, not a natural taste, built upon rewarding experiences with books. For such experiences to take place the child needs:

1. an ample and varied supply of suitable books
2. contact with an informed and enthusiastic adult for guidance
3. opportunities to discuss books with his peers and with others
4. the provision of time, and a quiet, secure place, in which to read.

Even if these needs have been supplied, however, it is the thesis of this study that there are two other major factors affecting reading experience. These are:

- a) the degree of skill the reader has in choosing books which he or she will like
- b) the extent to which the reader has certain personal qualities.

a) It has been repeatedly shown (Chapters 3, 4, 5) that avid readers are more likely to finish the books they have chosen and less likely to reject them. Those who choose books for superficial reasons tend both to reject them and to dislike what they have chosen (Chapter 6). The superficial reasons are those which concentrate upon the cover, the title, the size of print and the illustrations; effective strategies for choosing books involve reading passages from it, using someone's recommendation, judging the author or series from other books read, and finding out what the book is about. Avid readers tend to give fewer superficial reasons for choosing books - to choose better - than non-avid readers, but the trend is not significant. Since as many as 11% of the books borrowed from the library during the Book Form experiment were chosen for poor reasons, and since even avid readers are not immune from such faulty strategies, it is concluded that these children would enjoy reading more, and thus read more extensively, if they were given specific tuition in how to choose books from libraries which they would like. It is suggested, moreover, that poor choosing strategies are one of the reasons for the often-reported but largely unexplained decline in reading after 11 - 12 years. At this age children are beginning to sample adult books, where the choice is even wider and more bewildering, and the guidelines fewer. If they are not given the techniques whereby they might avoid frequent disappointment,

they will not bridge the gap between juvenile and adult material and at 14+ are likely to become part of the 30 - 40% (Whitehead) who read books rarely if at all.

b) Chapter 8 shows that avid readers tend to have certain personal qualities. Both sexes tend to be calm, stable and mature, undemanding and undemonstrative, able to persevere and to postpone gratification. They are more independent, more persistent and better at concentrating, while the avid girls are also vigorous, positive and zestful, and the avid boys self-disciplined and self-controlled. As it is unlikely that reading has made them like this, it may be that these are the qualities which make extensive book-reading easier. Children who find it difficult to concentrate, to persevere and to be self-reliant, need to be helped by the provision of a regular time and a quiet place to read in, together with guidance towards books with a straightforward plot, clear characterisation and the constant interjection of humorous or interesting incidents, which encourage and develop reading stamina. Examples of such books are The Pigman by Paul Zindel and The Midnight Fox by Betsy Byars.

The study as a whole shows strong sex differences, with boys reading, and liking reading, much less than girls. Even the personality scores show rather more tendency towards sex differentiation than do the US norms. No attempt is made here to relate the population under study to any other group, or to prove its typicality, so it is impossible to suggest reasons for these findings. Within the investigation itself, however, the negative attitude of some of the boys suggests that their image of what readers are

like is far from the reality revealed here. Such assumptions are not unique to this group; Downing (1979) in a cross-cultural study writes that "the trend ... is for males to begin by accepting reading as a masculine activity and then later to switch (by age 9) to allocating it to the feminine role." Girls, he reports, regard reading as a feminine activity from age 6 to adult. If some of the Cheshire boys thought of reading in this way, then dissemination of the truth about readers' personalities might influence their attitudes.

The reasons for the variation in voluntary reading are clearly complex, and far from being disentangled. It is suggested here, however, that further investigation of the personality characteristics of avid and less frequent readers might be valuable, and that schools could usefully spend time teaching children strategies for choosing books they will find rewarding rather than disappointing.

## APPENDICES

20 QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BOOKS YOU LIKE

1. WRITE YOUR NAME HERE : \_\_\_\_\_

2. DO YOU LIKE READING ? ☐ YES ☐ NO  
(Put a tick in one of the boxes)

3. DO YOU OFTEN READ ANY MAGAZINES OR COMICS OR NEWSPAPERS ? ☐ YES ☐ NO  
(If you answered NO, go on to Question 4.)  
(If you answered YES, write a list of all the magazines or comics or newspapers you often read.)

NAMES OF MAGAZINES OR COMICS OR NEWSPAPERS YOU READ

Put only one on each line.


Put only one on each line.


4. ARE YOU A MEMBER OF A PUBLIC LIBRARY ?

☐ YES

☐ NO



- (Don't count books which a teacher said you must read as part of a lesson or for "homework."  
Do include both fiction and non-fiction books.)

If you answered NO, go on to Question 10.

- WRITE DOWN THE TITLES AND AUTHORS OF ALL THE BOOKS YOU CAN REMEMBER READING SINCE 1943-1951.  
(Write a sentence about the book if you don't know what it was called.)

TITLE

## AUTHOR

1. HAVE YOU READ ANY OF THE BOOKS YOU PUT DOWN MORE THAN ONCE ?  
(If you have, go back and underline it, like this : *Top Secret* *Starts* *B. Ashley*)

2. DID YOU DECIDE NOT TO FINISH READING ANY OF THE BOOKS ?  
(Go back and put an X by any book you decided not to finish, like this : *The Old Castle* X)

3. NOW TURN THE PAGE ROUND AND FOR EACH BOOK PUT A TICK IN ONE OF THE BOXES TO SHOW WHERE YOU GOT THE BOOK FROM.

from the class library	
from the school library	
from the Public library	
from a friend	
from a relative	
it belongs to me.	

10. TRY TO REMEMBER THE BEST BOOK YOU HAVE EVER READ. WRITE DOWN WHAT IT WAS CALLED AND WHO WROTE IT.

TITLE

AUTHOR

(If you cannot remember the title or author of the book, write a sentence below saying what it was about.)

11. DO YOU ALWAYS FINISH EVERY BOOK YOU BEGIN TO READ ?

☐ YES

☐ NO

12. HAS YOUR TEACHER READ ALOUD FROM ANY BOOKS THIS TERM, TO THE CLASS ?

(If the answer is YES, write the book or books down here :

TITLE

AUTHOR

☐ YES

☐ NO

13. DO YOU HAVE A FAVOURITE WRITER OR AUTHOR ?

☐ YES

☐ NO

(If the answer is YES, put his or her name down here :

14. DO YOU MAKE FRIENDS EASILY ?

☐ YES

☐ NO

15. DO YOU WORRY ABOUT WHAT PEOPLE THINK OF YOU ?

☐ YES

☐ NO

16. DO YOU OWN ANY BOOKS YOURSELF ? (Books that belong to you.)

Put a tick by the one right answer.

<input type="checkbox"/>	I do not own any books myself
<input type="checkbox"/>	I own up to 10 books
<input type="checkbox"/>	I own up to 25 books
<input type="checkbox"/>	I own up to 50 books
<input type="checkbox"/>	I own up to 100 books
<input type="checkbox"/>	I own more than 100 books

17. DO YOU THINK THAT YOU READ MORE BOOKS NOW THAN YOU USED TO A YEAR AGO ?

☐ MORE

☐ LESS

18. NOW GIVE YOUR REASONS FOR YOUR ANSWER TO QUESTION 17.

19. HOW DO YOU SPEND YOUR SPARE TIME ?

Put a tick by the one right answer.

<input type="checkbox"/>	I spend my spare time mostly with my friends
<input type="checkbox"/>	I spend my spare time mostly doing things on my own
<input type="checkbox"/>	I spend my spare time mostly with members of my family.

20. WHAT IS YOUR DATE OF BIRTH ?

Day      Month      Year       
FOR THESE QUESTIONS TO SEE IF YOU HAVE LEFT ANYTHING OUT.

## APPENDIX 2 : THE SECONDARY QUESTIONNAIRE

### TWENTY QUESTIONS

NAME: ...

1. HOW MUCH DO YOU LIKE READING ?

- ☐ Dislike very much  
☐ Dislike  
☒ Not sure  
☐ Like  
☐ Like very much

2. DO YOU OFTEN READ ANY MAGAZINES OR COMICS OR NEWSPAPERS ?

- ☒ Yes      ☐ No

(If you answered No, go on to Question 4.)

(If you answered Yes, write a list of all the comics or magazines or newspapers you read.)

NAMES OF COMICS OR MAGAZINES OR NEWSPAPERS YOU READ

Daily Mirror, Sunday Mirror, Sunday People  
and Smash Hits

3. ARE YOU A MEMBER OF A PUBLIC LIBRARY ?

- ☐ Yes      ☒ No

4. ARE YOU READING A BOOK NOW ?

- ☒ Yes      ☐ No

AUTHOR

TITLE

Aidan Chambers

Haunted Houses

5. DO YOU THINK YOU WILL READ IT TO THE END ?

- ☒ Yes      ☐ No

6. HAVE YOU EVER READ IT BEFORE ?

- ☐ Yes      ☒ No

7. WHY DID YOU CHOOSE IT ? Because I like frightening  
stories.

8. WHERE DID YOU GET IT FROM ? The School Library.

9. HAVE YOU JUST FINISHED READING A BOOK ?

- ☒ Yes      ☐ No

AUTHOR

TITLE

Judy Blume

It's not the end of the world

10. DID YOU READ IT TO THE END ?

- ☒ Yes      ☐ No

11. HAVE YOU EVER READ IT BEFORE ?

- ☐ Yes      ☒ No

12. WHY DID YOU CHOOSE IT ? Because I had read one of  
her other books and it was good.

13. WHERE DID YOU GET IT FROM ? The School Library.

14. ABOUT HOW OFTEN DO YOU READ FOR PLEASURE DURING A WEEK ?

- ☐ Every day  
☒ Several times a week  
☐ Once a week  
☐ Not very often

15. HAVE YOU EVER BOUGHT ANYTHING FROM THE SCHOOL BOOKSHOP ?

- ☐ Yes      ☒ No

## APPENDIX 2 : THE SECONDARY QUESTIONNAIRE

16. DO YOU OWN ANY BOOKS YOURSELF ? (Books that belong to you.)

Put a tick by the one right answer.

- |                                     |                               |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | I do not own any books myself |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | I own up to 10 books          |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | I own from 11 to 25 books     |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | I own from 26 to 50 books     |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | I own from 51 to 100 books    |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | I own more than 100 books     |

17. DO YOU THINK THAT YOU READ MORE BOOKS NOW THAN YOU USED TO A YEAR AGO ?

☒

More

☐

Less

18. NOW GIVE YOUR REASONS FOR YOUR ANSWER TO QUESTION 17.

Because this year

I have more of a choice of different books

19. HOW MUCH DO YOUR PARENTS READ ?

Mother

<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

- <----- A great deal; very much ----->
- <----- Quite a lot ----->
- <----- Not very much ----->
- <----- Hardly at all ----->

Father

<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

IF YOU KNOW ANY OTHER GROWN-UPS WHO READ A LOT, WRITE THEM DOWN HERE :

My Gran

20. NOW COMPLETE THESE SENTENCES AS TRUTHFULLY AS YOU CAN:

The thing I like best about reading is that you can often get

carried away with the story and think that you're in it

The place I like to be when I am reading is In my bedroom or

in the living room when it is quiet

I wish that books could all be good, then we could

have any book, without thinking it is boring.

I dislike books that have stories which are thick and

can never happen.

NOW LOOK THROUGH THE QUESTIONS TO SEE IF YOU HAVE LEFT ANYTHING OUT.

YOU MAY USE THIS SPACE TO ADD ANYTHING ELSE YOU WISH TO :

My favourite  
author is Judy Blume. Her books are  
about children of my age.

ANSWER THE REST OF THE QUESTIONS WHEN YOU HAVE FINISHED YOUR BOOK

Date you finished with this book .....

3. How much of the book did you decide to read ? (Tick one box)

<input type="checkbox"/>	I read all of it
<input type="checkbox"/>	I read more than half of it
<input type="checkbox"/>	I read less than half of it
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	I read a few pages

4. If you did not read all of the book, give your reasons for deciding not to finish it I didn't finish it...

because I couldn't get into the story... (If you read the book to the end, go to 5.)

5. What did you think of this book ? (Tick one box)

<input type="checkbox"/>	It was one of the best books I have ever read
<input type="checkbox"/>	I liked it very much
<input type="checkbox"/>	I quite liked it
<input type="checkbox"/>	I did not like it much
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	I did not like it at all

6. How difficult was it to read ? (Tick one box)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Very difficult
<input type="checkbox"/>	Quite difficult
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not difficult but not easy
<input type="checkbox"/>	Easy
<input type="checkbox"/>	Very easy

7. If there is anything else you would like to say about your book, write it here .....

What you think about your book

Your name ..... Form 113

Title of book A Whisper of Love

Author Gillian Cross Date you began the book 6/5/82

ANSWER THE FIRST TWO QUESTIONS WHEN YOU TAKE A BOOK TO READ

1. Where did the book come from ? (Tick one box)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	I got it from the school library
<input type="checkbox"/>	My English teacher gave it to me
<input type="checkbox"/>	It belongs to me
<input type="checkbox"/>	I got it from a friend
<input type="checkbox"/>	I got it from a relative
<input type="checkbox"/>	Anywhere else (Write it here): .....

2. Why did you choose this book ? (Tick any that are true)

<input type="checkbox"/>	I have read other books by the same author
<input type="checkbox"/>	I have read other books in the same series
<input type="checkbox"/>	I chose it because I liked the cover
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	I chose it because I liked the title
<input type="checkbox"/>	I chose it because I liked the size of print
<input type="checkbox"/>	I chose it because I liked the pictures
<input type="checkbox"/>	I read a page or so and liked it
<input type="checkbox"/>	I am interested in what the book is about
<input type="checkbox"/>	I have heard some of it read aloud, or seen it on TV
<input type="checkbox"/>	I have read it before
<input type="checkbox"/>	Someone told me it was good
<input type="checkbox"/>	Another reason (Write it here): .....

# APPENDIX 4 : THE DIARY FORM

ALL THE THINGS I DID	WITH WHOM?	WHERE?	SPECIAL DETAILS
7.00am			
asleep	Nobody	bed	lightly
7.15			
wake up	Nobody	bed	heavy eyed
7.30			
Get up	Mum	bedroom	Slowly
7.45			
Get dressed	Nobody	bedroom	School uniform
8.00			
Eat breakfast	Brother	dining room	corn flakes
8.15			
Get bag ready for school	Nobody	front room	only two boots
8.30			
Help wash breakfast things	Mum	kitchen	3 bowls & cups
8.45			
Start off for school	brother	house	not far
9.00			
In library	Alinda	library	got new book out
9.15			
In registration	ID + 3b	E.1	quite noisy
9.30			
reading	Nobody	E.1	chattered for
"	"	"	green knowe
9.45			
"	"	"	"
10.00			
Ready for break	ID + 3b	"	everybody eager
10.15			
Play ball	Angela C. Adeline V.	Fields	Play in the middle
10.30			
Ready to come in	"	"	quite hot
10.45			
Exams start	ID + 3b	E.2	English exam
"	"	"	"
11.00			
Exams continue	"	"	"
11.15			
"	"	"	"
11.30			
"	"	"	"
11.45			
Nearly finished exam	Nobody	E.2	writing essay
12.00			
Finish exam	ID + 3b	E.2	long essay
12.15			
eating dinner	Alinda G. Angela C. Adeline V.	Hall	Finished last
12.30			
Out on fields	Fields		Playing ball
12.45			
"	"	"	"
1.00			
Ready to come in	Adeline V.	Fields	Very hot
1.15			
Reading	Nobody	E.1	out of this
1.30			
"	"	"	notland in again
1.45			
Start getting ready for exam	ID + 3b	"	English
2.00			
Exams start	ID + 3b	E.1	English
2.15			
Exams continue	ID + 3b	"	"
2.30			
Still exams	ID + 3b	"	"
"	"	E.1	Nearly finish
2.45			

# APPENDIX 4 : THE DIARY FORM

ALL THE THINGS I DID	WITH WHOM?	WHERE?	SPECIAL DETAILS
3.00pm Exams	10 + 36	E1	boring
3.15 "	" "	"	"
3.30 "	" "	"	"
3.45 Stood talking with friend	Kyrling	Her room	told secrets
4.00 Making drink of orange	brother	kitchen	cool drink
4.15 watching television	Family	front room	John Green
4.30 "	" "	" "	"
4.30 Reading Hidden jewels *	Nobody	" "	adventure story
4.45 "	" "	" "	Good book
5.00 Help mum with tea	Mum	kitchen	Chips
5.15 "	"	"	"
5.30 Sat down to tea	Family	dining room	lovely dinner
5.45 Help clear up	Mum + Dad	kitchen	washing up
6.00			
6.15			
6.30 Go upstairs	Nobody	Stairs	13 stairs
6.45 Got undressed	Nobody	bedroom	quite warm
7.00 Came down	" "		
7.15 Had a drink	brother	front room	cool cold
7.30 revised	Nobody	bedroom	English
7.45 reading *	Nobody	downstairs	adventure story
8.00 Went to bed	" "	bedroom	tired
8.15 reading Hidden Jewels *	" "	"	excited
8.30 "	" "	"	"
8.45 "	" "	"	Nearly Finished
9.00 "	" "	"	"
9.15 Finish book *	" "	"	revised
9.30 lie there	" "	"	not tired
9.30 Start another book again. * out of his world and back	" "	"	Creepy book
9.45 read *	" "	"	not so creepy
10.00 "	" "	"	" " "
10.15 Put bee finish book *	" "	"	Surprised
10.30 Try to go to sleep	" "	"	tired
10.45 asleep	Nobody	bedroom	blocked nose



## APPENDIX 5: ONE MONTH'S READING

By the summer of 1982, four different methods of measuring the amount of book and periodical reading of the same group of pupils had been essayed. A questionnaire in 1981 had asked them to list retrospectively the books they had read during the previous month; another questionnaire (given twice) had in April and May 1982 asked them to name the book, if any, they were currently reading and the book they had just finished; a diary format had elicited the number of quarter-hours they spent in reading of any kind over three separate days; and finally half the children had filled in a 'book form' every time they took out a school library book.

One final method of assessment was adopted, both in order to confirm once more the results already obtained and to consider its relative validity as a measuring instrument. This was called the One Month's Reading Record. Twice a week throughout that month in 1982 pupils, now in their second year at the comprehensive school, completed the relevant section of a form asking them to list the books, comics, newspapers and magazines they were reading, together with a simple code to show whether the books had been begun that week, had been finished that week, or had been rejected unfinished.

The results were expressed as a figure from one to ten, reflecting the number of different titles listed over the month, whether finished or not. No pupil gave no book titles at all, even when the class readers which some children listed had been excluded. No indication was given of the provenance of the books read, but a very high proportion of those mentioned were in fact in school or class libraries,

particularly the latter, and had probably been borrowed from there. It was also interesting to note that the number of different titles was relatively small and that a particular book often seemed to 'travel' during the month so that by the end four or five children had read it, presumably having recommended it to each other. Indeed the pupils when filling in the forms often volunteered the information that a book was currently being read because of a friend's influence.

The reading record results were correlated with the 'categories' obtained from Secondary Questionnaire A and B. The latter were added together so that each pupil had a score of 0 - 4 depending on their answers to questions 4 and 9 in the questionnaires. Each pupil had also read between one and ten books during the month, and the correlation between these two sets of figures, expressed as a contingency coefficient, was .494, with a probability of less than 0.01. Table A.1 shows the data in a 3 x 4 contingency table.

TABLE A.1 : Frequency of children in different categories  
listing up to ten books as having been read in  
November 1982

	Categories				
Books listed	0 & 1	2	3	4	<u>Total</u>
1 - 2	8	7	4	2	21
3 - 4	4	10	8	6	28
5 - 10	1	3	8	18	30
<u>Total</u>	13	20	20	26	79
df = 6	Chi squared = 25.5		p<.001	C = .494	
	C = .6 (corrected)				

# APPENDIX FIVE : ONE MONTH'S READING

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YOUR READING

Name: .....

We want you to keep a list during November of all your reading : books from English lessons, books from the school library or public library, books from home or friends.

Write down the title and author of any books you are reading now ( not text-books).

Put S in the end column if you started the book during the week.

Put R in the end column if you began it before and are still reading it.

Put F in the end column if you have finished it.

Put FX in the end column if you decided not to finish reading it.

If you read any comics or magazines during the week, put those down.

8

	<u>TITLE OF BOOK</u>	<u>AUTHOR</u>	<u>S/R/F/FX</u>
Tues 2nd:	Orange Hill Tucker and Co / Philp Remond		F
	Annie /		F
Thurs 4th:	All about my naughty little sister / D Edwards		F
	Gemma ALONE / Noel Streetfield		S, <u>FX</u>
Comics & Magazines & Newspapers <u>Holsten Journal</u> , <u>Juckie</u>			
Tues 9th:	Beside the Sea with Jerry James / D. Wilson		S <u>FX</u>
Thurs 11th:	Absent		
Comics & Magazines & Newspapers <u>Blue Jeans</u> <u>Holsten Journal</u>			
Tues 16th:	The 12th Day of July / Joan Lingard		S
Thurs 18th:	The 12th Day of July / Joan Lingard		R
Comics & Magazines & Newspapers <u>The Blue Jeans</u> <u>Chronicle</u>			
Tues 23rd:	Charlie and the Chocolate Factory / R Dahl		F
	Charlie and the great Glass Elevator / R Dahl		S
Thurs 25th:	absent		
Comics & Magazines & Newspapers			
Tues 30th:	Nothing to add		
	Nothing to add		
	Juckie, Nantwich Chronicle		

The correlation here may seem rather low, given that the two sets of data were attempts to measure the same thing. It should be remembered, however, that the contingency coefficient does not attain unity even when variables are perfectly correlated, its upper limit being about 0.8 for a table such as this (Siegel 1956 page 201). After a correction for grouping has been applied (Garrett 1966 page 395) the contingency coefficient rises to .6. Moreover, work such as that by Heather (1981) has established that reading habits vary considerably over time, and the assessments here were carried out six to seven months apart from each other. Heather comments particularly on the way individual subjects either read more in summer than in winter or vice versa, and this clearly applies to differences between April/May and November. The questionnaires of course measured reading at two specific points in time, and absentees were excluded; the Reading Record, however, measured over one month, and those absent for part of that time had to be included. For all these reasons, then, the correlation is about what one would expect.

A group of 15 'avid' readers had already been established from the evidence of the two Secondary Questionnaires and the Diaries. The scores of this group were correlated against those of all the others on the Reading Record. Again, chi squared emerges as significant, at  $p < .01$ , but the contingency coefficient remains relatively low at .43. Table A.2 refers, indicating that those who were avid in April and May were less so in November.

TABLE A.2: Frequency of 'avid' readers and 'others' listing  
up to ten books as having been read in November  
1982

Books listed	'Avid' readers	'Others'	<u>Totals</u>
1 - 2	0	21	21
3 - 4	4	24	28
5 - 10	11	19	30
<u>Total</u>	15	64	79

Chi squared = 11.4

p<.01

C = .355

C = .43 (corrected)

### SUMMARY

The One Month's Reading Record is quick to score and easy to administer during lessons as a regular part of school routine. It yields less information than questionnaires, but has the advantage of measuring reading regularity and variation over a longer period of time and thus may be a better way of assessing an activity that is essentially a habit. Indeed it is sufficiently flexible and adaptable to be used to cover any period of time required. When used with a group of children it may give an indication of how books 'travel' under the influence of peer recommendation. Moreover, as the example in this Appendix shows, one can see from a Reading Record how long a child has taken to complete, or reject, a book, and this is something questionnaires and diaries do not reveal. The Book Forms do show this, but a reader of periodicals only, however avid, or of books from non-school sources, might fill in no Book Forms at all and be regarded as 'infrequent'. The Month's Reading Record, therefore, is a simple and convenient way of recording reading habits.

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